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MRS. FITZHERBERT AND GEORGE IV

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Mrs. Siddons

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MRS. FITZHERBERT

AND

GEORGE IV

BY

W. H. WILKINS, B.A., F.S.A.

AUTHOR OF

"AN UNCROWNED QUEEN" [illegible]

"THE LOVE OF AN UNCROWNED QUEEN" [illegible]

WITH TWO SECTIONS

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

91 AND 93 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK

LONDON AND BOMBAY

1926

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MRS. FITZHERBERT

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W. H. WILKINS, M.A., F.S.A.

AUTHOR OF

"THE LOVE OF AN UNCROWNED QUEEN," "CAROLINE THE ILLUSTRIOUS QUEEN CONSORT OF GEORGE II.," "A QUEEN OF TEARS"

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

91 AND 93 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK

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1906

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To

THE LADY CONSTANCE LESLIE

YOUNGEST DAUGHTER

OF

MRS. FITZHERBERT'S ADOPTED DAUGHTER

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

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PREFACE

THE marriage of Mrs. Fitzherbert and George, Prince of Wales, afterwards George IV., is one of the romances of the later Georgian era. The extraordinary secrecy that surrounded the marriage, the fact that it was twice denied in the House of Commons, the persistence of the rumour that asserted its existence, the religious and constitutional questions involved by the secret marriage of the heir-apparent to the Throne with a Roman Catholic lady of good, but not of royal, birth, combine to make it one of the most interesting events in the history of the House of Hanover.

Though references to Mrs. Fitzherbert, more or less correct, and more or less detailed, may be found in many letters, memoirs, and diaries of the period, there is a great lack of definite information concerning herself and her marriage with the Prince of Wales. Her personality was a very elusive one, and her dislike of publicity deepened the mystery which surrounded her throughout her long life. Yet it was her intention that her authorised biography should one day be written, and the truth of her marriage be told. To that end, in 1833, she reserved certain papers from destruction, and deposited them in Messrs Coutts's Bank; to that end also she dictated to Lord Stourton, her cousin and trustee, a short narrative of her life, to be published when he should think fit. Lord Stourton died without having completed the task; for though, with Lord Albemarle, he was a trustee of Mrs. Fitzherbert's papers at Coutts's Bank, the Duke of Wellington, who represented the late king, George IV., refused him permission

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to see them. Before his death in 1846, Lord Stourton committed to his brother, the Hon. Charles Langdale, the duty which Mrs. Fitzherbert had laid upon him. Mr. Langdale, like his brother, Lord Stourton, failed, for reasons given in detail elsewhere,[1] to obtain the papers at Coutts's Bank, which Mrs. Fitzherbert had placed there for the express purpose of vindicating her honour; but he published in 1856 a brief memoir, entitled "Memoir of Mrs. Fitzherbert, with an account of her Marriage with H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, afterwards King George IV." This volume, incomplete though it is, is the only memoir of Mrs. Fitzherbert worthy of the name, and nearly all subsequent writers have drawn their information from this source alone. Only a limited number of copies of the book were printed; Mr. Langdale refused to allow a second edition to appear, and it has long been out of print.

Since 1856, numerous applications have been made by representatives of Mrs. Fitzherbert's family, and others, to see the papers which she deposited at Coutts's Bank, but these applications have always been refused, as they were refused to Lord Stourton and to Mr. Langdale. How far these documents proved the disputed fact of her marriage to George, Prince of Wales, has therefore remained an open question. From time to time, memoirs have been published of famous personages who lived in the later Georgian era, and in these, with few exceptions, the marriage of Mrs. Fitzherbert and of the Prince of Wales has been discussed; though the versions differed widely, the discussions have at least served to keep alive the interest in the subject. Moreover, Mrs. Fitzherbert was connected by birth and marriage with many of our old Roman Catholic families; among these, and indeed in all the great Roman Catholic families in the kingdom, the subject of her relations with George IV. is, and always had been, a matter of great interest. Though her mar-

[1] *Vide* Appendix A, "The Fitzherbert Papers."

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riage was illegal, she was regarded by them as the canonical wife of George IV.; and the refusal to publish the papers necessary to place her honour beyond doubt was regarded by many Roman Catholics as a slight on their religion, and by her family and friends as a slur on her memory. Moreover, the persistent refusal for seventy years to allow these papers to be published, has given rise to many false and improbable stories concerning their contents.

Some three or four years ago, certain members of Mrs. Fitzherbert's family placed sundry papers in my hands for the purpose of writing her biography in a fuller and more connected manner than the memoir of Mr. Langdale. It was felt that the time had arrived for carrying out Mrs. Fitzherbert's wishes, and completing the task which Lord Stourton had failed to accomplish, and Mr. Langdale had only partly achieved. The distance of time, and the fact that all the characters in the drama were long since dead, was thought to form a sufficient guarantee that no susceptibilities could be wounded by reviving the subject. The events of which I was to write — of which I have written — took place nearly a century ago, some of them more than a century; a whole generation, nearly two generations, had passed away, and neither George IV. nor Mrs. Fitzherbert left any descendants. The story of their marriage was therefore considered to have passed into the domain of history, and become a subject for legitimate historical research.

Notwithstanding the difficulty, due, for the most part, to the scanty material at my disposal, I accepted the task, for the subject has always interested me, and the Hanoverian period is one I have been working at for the last ten years. As I proceeded with the work, the difficulties grew less, for I received the kindest encouragement and assistance from the descendants of many of Mrs. Fitzherbert's relatives and friends, who placed letters and pictures at my disposal and gave me all information in

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their power. But I felt from the first that no biography of Mrs. Fitzherbert would be worth the writing which did not prove beyond all doubt the fact of her marriage with George, Prince of Wales. I felt that the marriage could never be proved without reference to the papers which Mrs. Fitzherbert had placed at Coutts's Bank in 1833 for that express purpose. These papers were still in existence, and, acting with the approval of the representatives of Mrs. Fitzherbert's family and friends, I made an application to His Majesty to see them, at the same time submitting the peculiar circumstances of the case. His Majesty was graciously pleased to grant my request, and I have been allowed to inspect the papers, and to publish in this book such of them, or such extracts from them, as seemed necessary for my purpose.

Without these documents it would have been impossible to vindicate completely Mrs. Fitzherbert's character. To His Majesty's generous permission is therefore due the fact that the honour and virtue of this much misunderstood woman are now established beyond doubt, and her memory cleared from every shadow or stain. By his chivalrous action in this matter, His Majesty has won, in especial degree, the loyal gratitude of those Roman Catholic families (and they are many) with whom Mrs. Fitzherbert was allied by birth or by marriage, and in a wider sense the gratitude of all honourable men and women. In her lifetime a great wrong was done to her; now, nearly seventy years after her death, that wrong has been set right.

I have called this book "Mrs. Fitzherbert and George IV." I have done so because it is impossible to write the life of Mrs. Fitzherbert without writing also of him with whom her life, for nearly half a century, was interwoven. The book is primarily a biography of Mrs. Fitzherbert ("Maria Fitzherbert, wife of George IV.," as the "Dictionary of National Biography" calls her); it is not a

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biography of George IV., except so far as his life, directly or indirectly, touches hers. But it touches hers so largely that I have felt justified in giving it the more comprehensive title. I shall not be thought to belittle the work of many excellent writers, when I say that a dispassionate life of George IV., based upon his letters and papers (of which there exist a good many unpublished), has yet to be written. These documents alone would reveal the true man, his wayward moods, his abilities which were considerable, his eccentricities which were many — all there is to praise and all there is to blame in this prince, perhaps the most abused of English kings, and, like many another man, often abused unjustly.

I have now only to express my indebtedness to those who have kindly helped me with this book.

My humble thanks are first due to His Majesty the King, for permitting me to see, and to quote from, the Fitzherbert papers, formerly at Messrs. Coutts's Bank, now in the private archives of Windsor Castle. His Majesty has also graciously allowed me to publish certain letters to the Duke of Kent, the Duke of York, and other members of the Royal Family to Mrs. Fitzherbert, which will be found in this book.

I have next to express my gratitude to Sir Walter Smythe, Bart., the present head of Mrs. Fitzherbert's family, without whose sanction this book would not have been written. I have also to thank Lady Smythe for the kind assistance she has rendered to me.

My thanks are especially due to Lady Blanche Haygarth and Lady Constance Leslie, the surviving daughters of the Hon. Mrs. George Dawson Damer (*née* Seymour), Mrs. Fitzherbert's adopted daughter. These ladies have given me the greatest help by the loan of letters and pictures, and in many other ways. I have thanked them in detail elsewhere, but I should like to express my acknowledgments here as well.

To Viscount Esher I owe a debt of gratitude for the

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invaluable aid he rendered me with regard to certain documents quoted in this book.

My thanks are due to Mr. Basil Fitzherbert, the present head of the Fitzherbert family, Mr. Charles Weld-Blundell, and to the late Mrs. William Langdale, daughter-in-law of the late Hon. Charles Langdale, cousin of Mrs. Fitzherbert, and author of her "Memoir." Messrs. Coutts also I thank for their courtesy.

I also wish to convey my grateful thanks to the following, who, in divers ways, specified elsewhere, have helped to make this book more complete, either by the loan of letters, pictures, or in other ways: —

His Grace the Duke of Rutland, K.G.; The Marquess of Zetland; The Earl of Albemarle; The Earl Manvers; The Dowager Countess Manvers; The Countess of Munster; The Earl of Munster; Countess Fortescue; Viscount Halifax; The Lady Horatia Erskine; The Lady Catherine Milnes Gaskell; The Lady Dorothea Rycroft; The Hon. C. R. Spencer, M.P.; The Hon. Gerald Ponsonby; The Hon. Frederick Wallop; Major General Sir Arthur Ellis, K.C.V.O.; Colonel Kenyon-Slaney, M.P.; The Rev. Canon Johnson, V.G. (of St. John the Baptist's Church, Brighton, where Mrs. Fitzherbert is buried); Dr. Chepmell; The Rev. A. C. Lowth, The Rev. M. Gavin, S.J.; Miss Mary Arthur; Mr. J. G. Bishop (the historian of the Brighton Pavilion); Mrs. Francis Blundell; Mr. W. B. Boulton; Miss Selina Bridgeman; Mr. Joseph W. Brooks; Miss Dundas; Mr. S. M. Ellis; Miss Gurwood; Mr. John Haines; Mr. John Harrington; Miss Lang; Mr. William Saunders; Mr. Arthur G. Sanderson; Miss Thornhill; Miss Thorold; and Mr. Towner.

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MRS. FITZHERBERT AND GEORGE IV

CHAPTER I

BIRTH AND PARENTAGE

(1756-1775)

MARIA FITZHERBERT was born on July 26, 1756, in the latter part of the reign of George II. She was the eldest child of Walter Smythe, second son of Sir John Smythe, Baronet, of Eshe Hall, Durham, and of Acton Burnell Park, Shropshire, by his marriage with Mary, the daughter of John Errington of Red Rice, Andover, Hampshire.

The Smythes are an old Roman Catholic family, originally hailing from the north of England. Sir Edward Smythe, the first baronet, owed his baronetcy to Charles II., who conferred it upon him after the Restoration in recognition of the services he had rendered to the royal cause during the great rebellion. The civil war had seriously impoverished the family fortunes, but Sir Edward Smythe repaired them by marrying Mary, daughter and coheiress of Sir Richard Lee, Baronet, of Langley and Acton Burnell. By this alliance the Shropshire estates came into possession of the Smythes, and Acton Burnell became, and has remained until this day, the principal seat of the family. The mansion is a handsome building of white stone, surrounded by a finely timbered deer park, and commanding a view of the distant Wrekin. Acton Burnell has historical associations. In the park are the ruins of an ancient castle, and near it are the remains of an immense tithe-barn. Here Edward I. held his parliament in 1283, when the celebrated statute of Acton Burnell was passed; the nobles assembled in the castle, and the Com-

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mons sat in the barn. In the old parish church hard by are many monuments of the Smythe family. There is a Roman Catholic chapel in the mansion originally built for a company of Benedictine monks who fled from France at the time of the Revolution, and were sheltered at Acton Burnell. One of the most interesting legends of Acton Burnell is that here was laid the scene of the introductory chapter of "John Inglesant." The place is steeped in the traditions of those who have held fast to the old faith.

Belonging to the great cousinhood of the old Roman Catholic families in England, the Smythes have allied themselves before and since Mrs. Fitzherbert's day with many illustrious houses of the same religion, such as the Arundells of Wardour, the Stourtons, the Staffords, the Stonors, the Jerninghams, the Cliffords, the Welds, the Blounts, the Fitzherberts, the Errington, the Herberts, and many others too numerous to be mentioned here. The Smythes have always been distinguished for their fine sense of patriotism and loyalty. The family motto is *Regi semper fidelis*, and the beautiful daughter of their house, whose story will be told in this book, certainly acted upon it. None was more faithful to her king than she; none suffered more for that fidelity.

Mr. Walter Smythe, Mrs. Fitzherbert's father, was a younger son, and received only a younger son's portion of the family fortune. It was difficult for him to supplement it, for, in consequence of the penal laws then existing against Roman Catholics, every career, at that time considered suitable for a youth of his birth and breeding, was closed to him. His desire was to serve his country in the profession of arms, but he was ineligible for either the army or the navy. He therefore followed the example of many other young Englishmen, sons of Roman Catholic nobility and gentry, and accepted a commission in the Austrian army. There is a picture of him at Acton Burnell in an Austrian uniform of green and scarlet, a handsome, soldierly-looking man, with flashing eyes and the aquiline nose characteristic of his race.

Walter Smythe entered the service of the Emperor of Austria shortly before the Jacobite rising of 1745. It was perhaps well for him that he was out of England at that time, for the Smythes, like all Roman Catholics, harassed by unjust laws, sympathised

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WALTER SMYTHE, Esq.

Mrs. Fitzherbert's Father

In the Uniform of an Officer in the Austrian Army

(*From a Painting at Acton Burnell, by permission of* Sir Walter Smythe, Bart.)

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with the cause of the Stuarts. Few English Roman Catholics were directly concerned in the rising, but when Charles Edward came south of the Border many of the younger Catholic nobility and gentry were ready to flock to his standard. Some did so and were involved in his ruin.

Walter Smythe did not come back to England until some years after the battle of Culloden had extinguished the hopes of the Stuarts. By then the great bulk of the English Roman Catholics had come to acquiesce hopelessly in the establishment of the Hanoverian dynasty, though for some the White Rose still retained its fragrance. Shortly after Walter Smythe's return he married, in 1755, Mary, daughter of Mr. John Errington, a cadet of the ancient Northumberland family of that name, with whom the Smythes of county Durham were remotely connected. Mary Errington had great beauty, and a moderate fortune — in those days a not inconsiderable dower. They were married (according to tradition, for there exists no record of the marriage) at Acton Burnell, where Walter's elder brother, Sir Edward Smythe, was then the reigning baronet. For the first few months of their married life they appear to have resided at Acton Burnell, and then they moved to Tong Castle, in the same county. Tong, an ancient castle dating back in legend to Saxon times, had passed into the possession of the last Duke of Kingston, who seldom resided there, and was then wishing to sell it. The Duke probably lent Tong to Walter Smythe for a time; it is possible that he appointed him, as a neighbour, to look after the management of the estate; it is certain that Smythe and his wife were residing at the castle in 1756. According to one authority, and agreeably also to family tradition, it was here that their eldest child, who in after years became celebrated as Mrs. Fitzherbert, was born, on July 26, 1756. It is impossible, however, to speak with certainty on this point; for there exists no public register of her birth owing to the fact that she was the child of Roman Catholic parents, and born previous to any measure of relief. Family registers were often kept (in Mrs. Fitzherbert's case even they were wanting), and wealthy parents used to have medals struck in commemoration of the birth of their children. Neither does there exist any record of her baptism. The priests in charge of the chief Roman Catholic missions had private registers, but these were

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not kept in the chapels.[1] According to the genealogical chart of the Smythe family, the child was christened Mary Anne, and she is thus denominated in the family tree at Acton Burnell, but Mrs. Fitzherbert signed herself "Maria," and under that name she was always known.

The only written authority in support of Mrs. Fitzherbert having been born at Tong is to be found in a book on the castle[2] wherein the author says: —

"Mr. H. F. Vaughan writes to me (November 17, 1884): Mrs. Fitzherbert, the wife of George IV., was born in the 'Red Room' at Tong Castle, having arrived somewhat unexpectedly during a visit of her parents at Tong, as I was informed by the late Madame Durant, with whose family my own was intimate." This Madame Durant, *née* Lafève, was the daughter-in-law of the George Durant who purchased Tong Castle from the Duke of Kingston in 1762,[3] so that the testimony is fairly direct. It would be in the fitness of things also if Mrs. Fitzherbert were born at Tong, for many famous women have been connected with the ancient castle, but none, it may be safely said, more celebrated than she. Tong is associated with Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, whose father, Evelyn, Duke of Kingston, owned it; with Venetia, Lady Digby, whose beauty formed the theme of Ben Jonson's "Eupheme," and with the witty and scandalous Elizabeth Chudleigh, Duchess of Kingston.

There exists, however, a local tradition to the effect that Mrs. Fitzherbert was not born at Tong Castle, but at a farm-house in the neighbouring village of Shifnal. Mr. and Mrs. Smythe, so the legend runs, were residing at Tong Castle in 1756, but as the time drew near for the lady's first confinement, her husband determined to take her to London for the event. They appear to have delayed their departure too long. They started from Tong one fine morning in July, on their journey

[1] For instance, at the beginning of the baptismal register kept at the Roman Catholic Church of the Holy Apostle, Norwich, there is written on the fly-leaf as follows: "A Register of Baptisms copied from Mr. Angier's, beginning from September 1775, no one being kept before by reason of the penal laws."

[2] "A History of Tong and Boscobel," by George Griffiths, 1894.

[3] Mr. George Durant "improved" the castle built by Sir Henry Vernon in 1500 on the site of an older one, by re-facing it with a mixed Moorish and Gothic exterior. The ownership of the Durants lasted nearly a century. In 1855 Tong Castle was sold to the Earl of Bradford.

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to London, and were driving in the family coach along the old posting road, when Mrs. Smythe was suddenly taken ill. As it was impossible to proceed on their journey, they took refuge in a farmhouse near by. In this modest dwelling, a few hours later, on July 26, 1756, Maria Fitzherbert was born.[1] It is an old red brick house, known as Hatton Hill Farm, in the parish of Shifnal, and is still standing. It appears to have been re-faced and to have had new windows put in, but otherwise it looks much the same as it might have done a hundred and fifty years ago.

Shortly after the birth of their eldest child, Mr. and Mrs. Smythe left Shropshire and bought an estate at Brambridge, near Winchester, which became their permanent home. Their reason for settling in Hampshire was doubtless because Mr. Errington, Mrs. Smythe's brother, lived not far off, at Red Rice, in the same county. The house at Brambridge was a comfortable, roomy mansion without any pretension, the sort of house that a country squire of moderate means might occupy. It dated from Charles II.'s reign, and was approached by a double avenue of limes.[2] At Brambridge in the succeeding years Mrs. Smythe gave birth to her other children, four sons and a daughter,[3] and some of their descendants lived there until a comparatively recent date. The Smythes were firmly attached to their religion, and one of their first acts at Brambridge was to fit up a room in a house in the village as a chapel, where a priest occasionally celebrated Mass. Later, when the Relief Acts made it possible, they established a Roman Catholic mission in the district,[4] and in after years their elder daughter, Mrs. Fitzherbert, then a widow in affluent circumstances, endowed it.

There is very little to record of Maria Smythe's girlhood. She grew up under the ban laid upon her religion. The Roman Catholic families of that day lived very much to themselves;

[1] I am indebted for this anecdote to Colonel Kenyon Slaney, M.P., of Hatton Grange, Shifnal, Shropshire. He was told it by his great-aunt Mrs. Holmes, who was a Miss Harriet Slaney, and who died in 1893 at the age of ninety.

[2] A fire in 1872 burnt the old house to the ground. It has since been rebuilt: the avenue of limes still stands.

[3] See note 3 on following page.

[4] The priest's house in the village has now been converted into a nurseryman's. In one of the rooms of the house may be seen traces of the chapel.

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they were regarded with dislike and suspicion by many of their neighbours, even those of education and equal birth, and were largely cut off from social intercourse. Deprived of their civil rights, treated as aliens and suspects in the land of their birth, they were forced to practise their religion almost by stealth. Their priests in England lived in fear, and the doors of the chapels were bolted before Mass began to keep out spies, for the Act of William and Mary, "An Act for the further prevention of the growth of Popery," was still unrepealed.[1] Under these circumstances it is no wonder that many Roman Catholics left England, while those that remained and held fast to their faith became, to quote the words of a dispassionate writer, "virtually outlaws in their own country, doomed to a life of secrecy and retirement."[2] We may be pardoned for dwelling on this state of affairs, for Mrs. Fitzherbert's childhood and

[1] So late as 1767 (eleven years after Mrs. Fitzherbert's birth) a priest was convicted and condemned under its provisions.

[2] "A History of England in the Eighteenth Century," by W. E. Lecky.

[3] SHORT PEDIGREE OF MRS. FITZHERBERT.

Sir JOHN SMYTHE (3rd Bart.), *d.* 1737. = CONSTANTIA, dau. of George Blount, Esq., sister of Sir Edward Blount (4th Bart.).

- Sir EDWARD SMYTHE (4th Bart.), *b.* 1719, *m.* (1) Maria, dau. of Peter Giffard, Esq. (2) Mary, dau. of Hugh, 4th Lord Clifford, *d.* 1784, having issue, from whom the present head of the family, Sir (John) Walter Smythe, 8th Bart., descends.
- WALTER, *m.* Mary, dau. of John Errington, Esq., *d.* 1788.
- CONSTANTIA, *m.* Marmaduke, 5th Baron Langdale, and had one daughter Mary, who married the 16th Lord Stourton.

Children of WALTER, *m.* Mary, dau. of John Errington, Esq., *d.* 1788.

- **Mary Anne** or **Maria**, *b.* July 26, 1756, *m.* (1) 1775, Edward Weld, Esq. of Lulworth. (2) 1778, Thomas Fitzherbert, Esq. of Swynnerton. (3) Dec. 15, 1785, George, Prince of Wales (afterwards George IV.), *d.* Mar. 29, 1837.
- WALTER, *b.* 1757, *m.* 1807, Louisa, dau. of Thomas Boycott, Esq., *d.* 1822, leaving two daus. (1) Louisa Mary, *m.* Sir Frederick Hervey Bathurst, Bart. (2) Charlotte Georgiana Harriett, *m.* the Hon. George Augustus Craven.
- JOHN, *m.* widow of Captain Strickland. He had a daughter Marianne (afterwards adopted by Mrs. Fitzherbert), who married the Hon. Edward Stafford Jerningham, 2nd son of George William Lord Stafford.
- CHARLES (of whom nothing is known).
- HENRY (of whom nothing is known).
- FRANCES, *m.* Sir Carnaby Haggerston, 5th Bart., *d.* 1836, having issue one daughter Mary, who married Sir Thomas Stanley, 9th Bart.

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TONG CASTLE, SHROPSHIRE

STATED TO BE MRS. FITZHERBERT'S BIRTHPLACE

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youth were passed before any measure of Roman Catholic relief was carried. The injustice of the penal laws made a deep impression on her, and so far from weakening her in her religion (as it did many) only confirmed her in her attachment to it.

In accordance with the custom of many of the English Catholic families in the eighteenth century, Maria Smythe was sent to Paris to be educated at the English Convent in the Faubourg St. Antoine, kept by Conceptionist nuns, known as the "Blew Nuns." For half a century this convent was the best and most select school for the daughters of English Roman Catholics.

One anecdote only has come to us out of the obscurity of her girlhood in Paris. On one of her holidays she was taken by her parents to Versailles, where they saw Louis XV. dine in public. (People were admitted by ticket, and stood behind a barrier to watch the monarch dine alone in state.) During the repast the French King pulled a chicken to pieces with his fingers. This so amused the little English girl that, regardless of the rule that no one should break the silence, she burst into a peal of laughter. The breach of etiquette might have led to her summary ejection, but Louis XV. took it very good-naturedly, and sent the pretty fair-haired child a dish of sugar plums by one of his attendant nobles, the Duke of Soubise. In after years when Mrs. Fitzherbert was an honoured guest at the French court, the Duke, then an old man, reminded her of the incident, and told her he was the bearer of the gift.

In relating this incident in her old age to Lord Stourton, Mrs. Fitzherbert said "that attentions from Royalty, as if to prognosticate her future destiny, commenced with her at a very early age." She added sadly that it was "rather a curious coincidence in her connection with Royalty that the last dregs of bitterness were presented to her from a Royal table connected with the French sovereign Louis XVIII." [1]

When her education with the "Blew Nuns" was completed, Maria Smythe returned to England. The influence of her

[1] "Memoirs of Mrs. Fitzherbert, with an account of her marriage with H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, afterward King George IV.," by the Hon. Charles Langdale. London, 1856.

Mrs. Fitzherbert referred to the great *fête* at Carlton House in 1811, given by the Prince Regent to the exiled Royal Family of France, when no place was allotted her at the Royal table.

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education in Paris was very marked in her after life. She loved France, and often visited Paris, where she had many friends; she spoke and wrote French fluently, and there was something in her temperament — her impulsiveness, her vivacity and love of amusement — which was more akin to the French character than the English.

The next few years of Maria Smythe's life were passed in her father's home at Brambridge, broken only by visits to some of her relatives. No girl was brought up in greater ignorance of the world, or led a more secluded life, yet, before long, "the beautiful Miss Smythe" began to be talked about in the quiet Catholic world. She was then in the first blush of her loveliness. Her abundant hair, which she wore naturally, in defiance of the fashion of the day, was of a pale gold, her eyes hazel-brown, her complexion that of the wild rose and hawthorn, her features exquisitely chiselled, her figure full of grace. Even more attractive than her beauty was her sunny disposition, her vivacity, her natural unaffected manner, which arose from absence of guile and kindness of heart, and an indefinable charm which clung to her through life.

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HATTON HILL FARM, SHIFNAL, SHROPSHIRE

ALLEGED TO HAVE BEEN MRS. FITZHERBERT'S BIRTHPLACE

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CHAPTER II

LULWORTH AND SWYNNERTON

(1775-1784)

THE beautiful Miss Smythe was not long left without suitors. In her eighteenth year, at her uncle's, Mr. Errington's, house, Red Rice, near Andover, she met Mr. Edward Weld of Lulworth Castle, Dorsetshire. Mr. Weld was a widower of forty-four years of age: his first wife, a daughter of Lord Petre, had died a few years before, leaving him without children. He straightway fell in love with Miss Smythe, and made her an offer of marriage. The master of Lulworth, head of one of the most ancient Roman Catholic families of England, and owner of many broad acres, was a great match for Maria Smythe, who had no dower but her beauty. She accepted him without demur, or rather he was accepted for her by her parents, for in those days marriages were arranged much on the French system. There is nothing to show that her duty and inclination did not go together, though her husband was twenty-six years older than herself and in delicate health. They were married early in 1775, when she was eighteen, and took up their residence at Lulworth Castle.

Very little comes to us out of the past concerning Mrs. Weld's brief reign at princely Lulworth, and few are the traditions of her life there. In one of the rooms of the castle there is a curious picture showing Edward Weld and his two wives on one canvas. Mr. Weld had been painted with his first wife, Juliana, and after his second marriage, there being room on the left side of the picture, he caused his second wife, Maria, to be painted in the vacant space. There he stands between his two wives, a doubtful compliment, one would think, to number two. But Mr. Weld was fond and proud of his beautiful second wife; there is another picture of her at Lulworth painted immediately after her marriage, probably by Gains-

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borough. I am indebted to Mr. Charles Weld Blundell for the following account of it:—

"It is unfinished as to her marvellous aureole of hair, which she persisted in wearing *au naturel*, when all wore wigs and other hideous erections. She is *pétillante d'esprit*, and would convince the most incredulous of her early beauty and originality. I have heard it said by my great-uncle Weld [1] that, when being painted for this portrait, she was so indignant the first sitting at the artist's outline of her fuzzy head, filled in with grey impaste, that she jumped up saying, 'Why, the man has given me a grey wig,' and bounced out of the room, vowing that nothing would induce her to sit any more to him. There is no trace in it of the aquiline nose which she developed later."

Miss Mary Frampton, of Moreton, whose parents lived near Lulworth, writes in her journal of Mrs. Weld at that time: "She was then (1775) very beautiful. She dined at Moreton on the day she was nineteen — perfectly unaffected and unassuming in manner, as I heard from my mother at that time, and as I have myself since seen." [2]

Mrs. Weld was not long at Lulworth; she lost her husband the first year of their marriage. Mr. Edward Weld died in 1775 after a brief illness without having made special provision for his widow. Many years later Mrs. Weld (then Mrs. Fitzherbert) told her adopted daughter, Mrs. Dawson Damer,[3] that "she had always been a most unlucky woman," and as an illustration of the truth of her saying, she referred to the circumstances of the death of her first husband. He had drafted a will, she said, leaving her everything in his power. He read it over to her in the library one morning, and was about to sign it and call witnesses, when she prevented him, saying, "Oh, do that later. It is such a lovely day, let us go for a ride." He yielded to her persuasion. During the ride Mr. Weld's horse stumbled and fell, bringing his rider down with him. Under ordinary circumstances the accident would not have been serious, for Mr. Weld was apparently uninjured. But it proved such a shock to his enfeebled constitution, that it hastened his

[1] Mr. Joseph Weld of Lulworth, who died 1863.

[2] "The Journal of Mary Frampton," 1885.

[3] Mary, a daughter of Lord Hugh and Lady Horatia Seymour, who married the Hon. George Lionel Dawson Damer, second son of the first Earl of Portarlington.

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ACTON BURNELL PARK, SHROPSHIRE

THE SEAT OF SIR WALTER SMYTHE, BART.

(*Mrs. Fitzherbert's ancestral home*)

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death. On returning home he took to his bed, and never rallied. He died a few weeks later, leaving his will unsigned. As there were no children, he was succeeded in the estates by his only surviving brother, Mr. Thomas Weld,[1] who made provision for his brother's widow, but on a different basis to the bounteous one in the unsigned will. Mr. Thomas Weld was not at Lulworth at the time of his brother's death, and as means of communication were slow, the young widow was left in the house for some days absolutely alone. But she had kind neighbours. "My father and mother," writes Mary Frampton, "knowing that Mrs. Weld was so young and without any friends with her, sent to offer her to remove to Moreton, or to give her any comfort or assistance in their power. This friendly conduct was on her side always repaid with great civility and attention."[2]

Of the three years of Mrs. Weld's widowhood, very little is known. She left Lulworth almost immediately after her husband's funeral. There is a tradition at Brambridge that she at one time lived in a cottage in the adjacent village of Colden Common.[3] It is possible that she went there in the early days of her widowhood to be near her parents. The cottage would be more in keeping with her means at that period of her life than at any other, for, in after years, she was too affluent to

[1] SHORT PEDIGREE OF THE WELD FAMILY.

Edward Weld (of Lulworth), *b.* 1731, *d.* 1775.
m. (1) 1763, Juliana, dau. of Robert Lord Petre.
(2) 1775, MARY ANNE, dau. of Walter Smythe, Esq.

|

Was succeeded by his brother Thomas Weld, *d.* 1810.

|

Who was succeeded by his son Thomas (afterward Cardinal) Weld, *d.* 1837.

|

Who was succeeded by his brother Joseph Weld, *d.* 1863.

|

Who was succeeded by his son Edward Joseph Weld, *d.* 1877.

|

Who was succeeded by his son Reginald Joseph Weld, the present head of the family.

[2] Frampton, *op. cit.*

[3] Concerning this the Rev. P. H. Owen (sometime vicar of Colden Common) writes, 1903: "The cottage still exists. It is one of the old commoner's cottages and stands in a hollow. I remember seeing some china article given by Mrs. Fitzherbert to the owner of the cottage. The late Mrs. Monro, widow of a former vicar of Colden Common, had in her possession a shawl belonging to Mrs. Fitzherbert which she (Mrs. Monro) had received from the occupant of the cottage in question.

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need so humble a residence. We find her also in London. Lady Jerningham mentions having met her there when she was the "Widow Weld." [1]

About this time a misfortune befell the Smythe family in the serious illness of their father, Mr. Walter Smythe, who was seized with paralysis, and remained a complete invalid until his death, which took place some years later.[2] It was a misfortune in more ways than one, for his four sons, handsome, high-spirited lads, were growing up to manhood, and were thus deprived of a father's guidance just when it was most needed. As these youths were Roman Catholics, they were subject to the same disabilities as those which had prevented their father from making a career for himself; the penal laws excluded them from the bar, from the army, the navy, and from every place of trust or profit under the government. One of them eventually followed his father's example and entered the Austrian army, but all of them, during the most impressionable years of their lives, were allowed to run wild. Mrs. Weld was devoted to her brothers and did all she could to help them, but at this time she was not able to do much, and when she had the power it was too late, for the years of idleness had done their work. Their paternal uncle, Sir Edward Smythe, did little for them, and it was to Mr. Henry Errington, their maternal uncle, that they looked for help and guidance. Mr. Errington was a wealthy man, and he gave both with ungrudging hand. When Mr. Smythe was incapacitated by illness, Mr Errington came to be regarded by all his sister's children (Mrs. Weld included) in the light of a guardian. He was generous and kind-hearted, a *bon viveur* and a man of tolerant mind, whose Catholicism sat lightly on him. But he was not, as events proved, a very wise one.

The young widow was too beautiful and attractive to remain long without offers of marriage. She refused several suitors, but in 1778, three years after the death of her first husband, she married Mr. Thomas Fitzherbert of Swynnerton in Staffordshire and of Norbury in Derbyshire. Her second marriage was no less advantageous in a worldly sense than her first had been; it gave her the same position of dignity and continued

[1] "The Jerningham Letters" (1780–1843), edited by Egerton Castle, 1890.
[2] He died January 14, 1788. His widow survived him many years.

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MRS. WELD

AFTERWARDS MRS. FITZHERBERT

(*From a Miniature by* RICHARD COSWAY, R.A., *by permission of* A. G. SANDERSON, Esq.)

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her amid the same gracious surroundings as those she had enjoyed at Lulworth. Like the Welds, the Fitzherberts were Roman Catholics; like them, they were an ancient and wealthy family, belonging to what has been termed the "untitled nobility of England." The Welds were of Saxon origin, the Fitzherberts descended from a Norman knight whose name appears on the roll of Battle Abbey. Mrs. Fitzherbert's second marriage was a happy one. There was not the same disparity of age between herself and her second husband as there had been in the case of her first marriage — Mr. Fitzherbert was only ten years her senior. But the second union, like the first, was unblessed with children. Mr. Weld had been something of a recluse; Mr. Fitzherbert was, for a Roman Catholic squire of those days, very much a man of the world. The Fitzherberts were very hospitable and popular and entertained largely at Swynnerton; their guests were chiefly of their own faith, though Mr. Fitzherbert lived on excellent terms with his Anglican neighbours. Mrs. Fitzherbert's younger sister, Frances, stayed at Swynnerton, and while there she became engaged to, and married, Sir Carnaby Haggerston, fifth baronet of that name, and head of an ancient Northumberland Catholic family. Lady Haggerston was almost as beautiful as her elder sister, but she lacked her social gifts and was of a quieter and less impulsive temperament.

The Fitzherberts also came to London every year. Their house in Park Street, Park Lane, was a meeting-place of many of the old Roman Catholic families, and Mr. Fitzherbert was active in keeping alive the *esprit de corps* among them. Yet he was one of the most liberal-minded of the influential Roman Catholic laymen, and he was one of the first to show openly his loyalty to the established dynasty. Though the rising in 1745 was still in the memory of many, a generation had grown up since the battle of Culloden. Charles Edward had sunk lower and lower in the estimation of his adherents, and was drinking himself to death on the continent. The House of Stuart had become the shadow of a shadow. It was now the second decade of George III.'s reign, and Roman Catholics were taking heart at the kindness shown to them by the King, who, though a staunch upholder of the national Church, was averse from the persecution of his Roman Catholic subjects. An agitation, in which Mr. Fitzherbert was interested, was begun, for repealing

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the more obnoxious laws against them, and it bore fruit in the Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1778, which repealed the very severe Act of 1699, though it still left them under many disabilities. The measure of relief thus granted was small, and the motive which prompted the government to pass it was probably political expediency rather than a more liberal one, but this concession to justice, little though it was, excited the bigotry of the Presbyterians in Scotland, and the Protestant Dissenters in England (the Church of England held aloof), with the result that "No-Popery Riots" broke out in different parts of the kingdom. In 1780 these culminated in the disgraceful riots in London headed by the half crazy Lord George Gordon. For six days the metropolis was virtually at the mercy of the drunken and infuriated mob. Roman Catholic chapels were pillaged and burned, several mansions were wrecked, the gaols of Newgate and Clerkenwell were broken open and the prisoners set free, and Newgate was set on fire. Nearly five hundred persons were killed or wounded. The magistrates seemed paralysed, and had it not been for the determination of the King, who insisted on the military being called out, the whole of London might have been burned to the ground. The houses of the leading Roman Catholic laity were fortified as though for a siege. Many of them worked hard to quell the tumult, and to help their priests to escape from the violence of the mob. No one was more active than Mr. Fitzherbert, who laboured untiringly, with results that proved fatal to himself. When order was at last restored he returned home much heated by his exertions. He bathed, and this his wife afterwards said was the beginning of the illness which caused his death. It brought on a violent chill which settled on his lungs, and defied all remedies. His wife nursed him with unremitting care, and when the winter came on she took him to the south of France, in the hope that the warmth and sunshine would help him to recover his strength. But all efforts were in vain. Mr. Fitzherbert died at Nice on May 7, 1781, at the early age of thirty-seven, nearly a year after the beginning of his illness. Mrs. Fitzherbert found herself left a widow for the second time at the age of twenty-five. Thus she was early made familiar with sorrow.

Mr. Fitzherbert was succeeded in the family estates of

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Norbury and Swynnerton by his brother Mr. Basil Fitzherbert, from whom the present head of the family descends.[1] Mr. Thomas Fitzherbert had left ample provision for his widow. He left her a jointure of nearly £2000 a year, the remainder of the lease of his town house in Park Street with all the furniture and appointments therein; his horses and carriages, "also the ponies or Galloways she usually drives in the phaeton" — in short, everything in his power.[2]

The two first years of Mrs. Fitzherbert's widowhood were passed in retirement. She remained at Nice some time after her husband's death, and erected a monument to his memory in one of the churches there. Then she went to Paris, where she had many friends. In Paris, Mrs. Fitzherbert, who was one of the most charitable of women, interested herself in an institution for the benefit of poor English Roman Catholic ladies who had taken refuge in France. This benevolence was afterwards distorted by her enemies into a charge that when she was in Paris she was engaged with certain French Jesuits in intriguing for "the promotion of popery in England." This falsehood may be taken as a measure of many of the untruths afterwards propagated concerning her.

In 1782 Mrs. Fitzherbert returned to England. We find a trace of her this year at Brighton.[3] Soon after her return she took on lease the beautiful villa of Marble Hill at Richmond,

[1] A Short Pedigree of the Fitzherbert Family.

Thomas Fitzherbert (of Norbury and Swynnerton), *b.* 1746, *d.* 1781.
m. 1778, Mary Anne, dau. of Walter Smythe, Esq., and widow of Edward Weld, Esq.

|

And was succeeded by his brother Basil Fitzherbert, *d.* 1797.

|

Who was succeeded by his son Thomas Fitzherbert, *d.* 1857.

|

Who was succeeded by his brother John Fitzherbert, *d.* 1863.

|

Who was succeeded by his nephew Basil Thomas Fitzherbert, Esq., now of Swynnerton, the present head of the family, *b.* 1836, who married Emily Charlotte, dau. of the Hon. Edward Stafford Jerningham and Marianne his wife (niece of Mrs. Fitzherbert).

[2] Mr. Fitzherbert's will was proved July 4, 1781, by Henry Errington (Mrs. Fitzherbert's uncle). From it these particulars are taken.

[3] In the supplementary Museum of the Royal Pavilion at Brighton there are four views of the Steine by a local artist, dated August 1, 1782, and dedicated to Mrs. Fitzherbert. This goes to show that she was well known at Brighton at that time.

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or, more properly, Twickenham. The house had been built by Mrs. Howard, afterwards Countess of Suffolk, the favourite of George II.: it was the famous villa of which Burlington and Pembroke designed the front, Bathurst and Pope planned the gardens, and Swift and Gay arranged the household. On Lady Suffolk's death it passed to her brother, and when he died it reverted to Miss Hotham, daughter of Sir Charles Hotham, who let it to Mrs. Fitzherbert. We may quote a description of the place as it was then from an old guidebook: —

"The house is most properly stiled Marble Hill; for such it resembles, in a fine green laun, open to the river, and adorned on each side by a beautiful grove of chesnut trees: the house is as white as snow, a small building without wings, but of a most pleasing appearance; the garden is very pleasant; there is an alley of flowering shrubs, which leads with an easy descent to a very fine grotto; there is also a smaller grotto, whence there is a fine view of Richmond Hill." [1]

Here Mrs. Fitzherbert lived quietly for a time, seeing only members of her family, and intimate friends. We find her in 1783 a young and lovely widow, and endowed with ample fortune, for £2000 a year in those days represented much more than it does now. Before long the rumour of her beauty spread abroad, her friends urged her to quit her seclusion, and at last she yielded to their advice and returned to London, to the house her husband had left her in Park Street. We find her soon the subject of newspaper paragraphs. The first mention of her is in the *Morning Herald*, March 20, 1784: "Mrs. *Fitzherbert* is arrived in London for the season."

In London she threw open her house to her friends and went into society. The many Roman Catholic families to whom she was allied, by birth or marriage, came to see her, and certain leaders of society called upon her, and made her welcome to their houses. Prominent among these was Lady Sefton,[2] one of the great ladies who for many years gave the *ton* to society in London. Lord and Lady Sefton, though not Roman Catholics, were connected with the Smythe family

[1] "A Short Account of the Principal Seats and Gardens in and about Twickenham." *Circa* 1770.

[2] Isabella, daughter of the second Earl of Harrington, and wife of the ninth Viscount and first Earl of Sefton.

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MARBLE HILL FROM THE RIVER

(Where Mrs. Fitzherbert was living when she first met the Prince of Wales)

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through the Erringtons. Lady Sefton showed the warmest sympathy and friendship towards her young kinswoman, and it was through her that Mrs. Fitzherbert became acquainted with other great ladies not of her religion, and on both sides of politics, such as the beautiful Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, the Duchess of Gordon, Lady Salisbury, Lady Cowper and others. This year marked her first appearance in what may be called general society, for during Mr. Fitzherbert's lifetime, she had moved almost exclusively among the Roman Catholic cousinhood. She was an immediate success. We find the following paragraph in the *Morning Herald*, July 27, 1784:—

"A new *Constellation* has lately made an appearance in the *fashionable hemisphere*, that engages the attention of those whose hearts are susceptible to the power of beauty. The Widow of the late Mr. F—h—t has in her train half our young Nobility: as the Lady has not, as yet, discovered a partiality for any of her admirers, they are all animated with hopes of success."

Mrs. Fitzherbert's beauty, her varied gifts, her means and good connections, all contributed to her social success. It was said that during this season in London she refused many excellent offers of marriage, including one from the young Duke of Bedford, who on her refusal never married, but remained in love with her until the day of his death.[1] Probably she wished to enjoy her freedom, and did not desire to enter the matrimonial state again so soon. It is certain that she might have married a third time almost any one she would, and have occupied an assured position of rank and dignity had not evil destiny thrown her in the path of the Prince of Wales.

[1] Francis, fifth Duke of Bedford (1765–1802). This is open to doubt, for the Duke was then only in his twentieth year, and in after life he was said to be in love with Charlotte, Princess Royal, eldest daughter of George III. The Duke, however, was always a great friend of Mrs. Fitzherbert's, and he died unmarried.

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CHAPTER III

PRINCE CHARMING

(1762–1784)

GEORGE, Prince of Wales, had barely come of age[1] when he first met Mrs. Fitzherbert, but he had already entered on that career of pleasure which marked his hot youth and his wild manhood. By his thousand extravagances, his racing, his gambling, his lavish hospitality, the "improvement" of his palace of Carlton House, and his reckless generosity to the fair sex, he was already piling up that burden of debt which was to embarrass him for the rest of his life.

By inclination as well as by position, he was the leader of fashion and gaiety in London, and society generally encouraged and applauded him in his extravagances. When the young Prince first "came upon the town," London was (after Paris) the gayest city in the world; and all society, men and women, old and young, were devoted to the pursuit of pleasure in its most showy and pronounced form. The spirit of robust enjoyment of the early Georgian era still flourished, but some of its grossness had worn off, and there had come a veneer, hardly to be called refinement, which seemed to have more in common with the Stuarts than with the House of Hanover. George III. and Queen Charlotte by their parsimonious court and strict lives had lost touch with society (in the restricted sense of the word, though they were popular with the middle classes), and could no longer restrain its excesses. They lived chiefly at Kew and Windsor, and except in name there was no longer a court in London. The advent, therefore, of a brilliant and handsome Prince, to whom the world seemed a garden of delight, was hailed with rapture. It was declared that for the

[1] George IV. was born at St. James' Palace, August 12, 1762.

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first time since the death of Charles II. an English Prince was a gentleman and a wit. It was hoped that the day of German predilections and German manners was over. To London society, weary of the dulness and ugliness of the courts of the early Georgian Sovereigns, this young Prince, born on English soil, bred in England, and speaking English with "no Westphalian accent," as Horace Walpole calls it, came as a Prince Charming. There is no doubt that the Prince of Wales was charming; no Stuart Prince was ever more graceful than he, more generous, and one would fain hope more chivalrous. He was tall, and finely formed; he had a handsome and manly countenance; his leg — legs were much esteemed in the eighteenth century — was the envy of all the beaux; his smile the desire of all the belles; and his bow the most princely bow of any prince in Europe. His beauty was heightened by the picturesque dress of the period. He dressed with great richness and variety, as well he might, for it is said that his clothes, for one year, amounted to no less than £10,000. One of his early admirers, who had every opportunity of judging, dwells on the "graces of his person, the irresistible sweetness of his smile, the tenderness of his melodious yet manly voice, the polish and fascinating ingenuousness of his manners." [1]

The young Prince had the happy faculty of seeming to be intensely interested in the person to whom he was talking, whoever that person might be, and he could talk well on almost any subject, for he had considerable natural ability and many accomplishments. He could speak French, Italian, and German fluently; he was well-read in the classics; he was a fine musician; and he affected a taste for art and the *belles lettres*. His taste was not always correct, and tended overmuch to the showy and florid, yet, in comparison with that of his father, who had no taste at all, it was hailed as perfect. With all his luxurious habits he could not be called effeminate. He loved outdoor exercise, and showed to great advantage on horseback; he was a good shot, an accomplished fencer, skilful in the noble art of self-defence, and could on occasion use his fists with good effect. These things stood to his credit. On the other hand it must be admitted that he was not truthful. But the

[1] "Memoirs of Mary Robinson: 'Perdita,'" 1895.

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blame for that did not rest wholly with him. "You know I don't speak the truth," he said once, "and my brothers don't, the Queen having taught us early to equivocate." It is also true that he was reckless and dissipated, that the town was full of stories of his wild doings, that he gambled, and drank and swore, and he had already been engaged in several affairs of gallantry. But these things did not make him unpopular; on the contrary, sad to relate, they rather added to his popularity. Most of the young men of fashion in those days (and many of the old men too) played for high stakes, drank more than was good for them, rapped out fearful oaths on the smallest provocation, and all too lightly regarded the marriage tie. One cannot make the young Prince responsible (as some would seem to do) for all the vices and follies of his day. In fact one cannot hold him altogether responsible for his own, when we look back on his loveless boyhood and unwise upbringing. His father was cold, stiff, and unsympathetic; he disliked his eldest son, treated him harshly, and openly insulted him before the courtiers. His mother alternately spoilt him and turned against him. His younger brother Frederick,[1] to whom he was devotedly attached, was taken away from him, when on the threshold of manhood, and sent to Hanover. He had no one to help or advise him, and it may be doubted whether there was one disinterested person, among all his so-called friends, who really cared for him. His impulses were good, he was affectionate and warm-hearted, generous and open-handed to a fault. We speak of him as he was in his early manhood; the time had not yet come when all the good in him was turned to evil by bad companions, parasites and flatterers, his very virtues tortured into vices, and every noble instinct choked by the growth of gross passions. One could not say of him even in his youth, that he was unspotted from the world, but one could say that he had more good in him than evil, and had his finer qualities been fostered and developed he would have grown up a wiser and a better man. His tutor, Bishop Hurd, was asked one day his opinion of his pupil, then a boy of fifteen years of age. "I can hardly tell," he replied; "he will be either the most polished gentleman or the most accomplished blackguard

[1] Frederick, Prince Bishop of Osnabrück, afterwards Duke of York, second son of George III.

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in Europe, possibly both." [1] The "possibly both" in years to come proved the true prediction.

The Prince of Wales had passed his boyhood shut up in a palace which was almost a prison, and deprived of rational amusements. His father's jealousy kept him back as much as possible, treating him as a child when he was a boy and as a boy when he was a man. So things went on until the Prince reached his nineteenth year, when, as he became legally of age as heir to the throne, the King could no longer keep him under lock and key, and was compelled to grant him a small establishment of his own and apartments in Buckingham House. For even this limited measure of freedom the Prince was all unprepared, and it is no wonder that his new-found liberty degenerated into license. He fell into bad company; he had an amour with the beautiful actress Perdita Robinson; he made friends with his uncle the Duke of Cumberland, who hated the King and Queen because of their refusal to receive his Duchess at court, and therefore did his best to prejudice the son against the father. He also became intimate with the Duke of Chartres, afterwards Duke of Orleans, the notorious Egalité, who led him into great extravagance. To all these companions the King naturally objected, but he objected still more to the Prince's connection with the Whigs, and especially to his close friendship with Charles James Fox, then at the height of his brilliant talents. George III.'s hatred of Fox amounted almost to a mania, and he came to regard him as the instigator of all his son's escapades. When the Prince came of full age in 1783 his friends the Whigs chanced to be in power, and Ministers proposed that the King should give him £100,000 a year from the Civil List. The King turned on them with an outburst of rage, and accused them of being "ready to sacrifice the public interests to the wishes of an ill-advised young man." He spoke tauntingly of the government — the Coalition Ministry — as "my son's Ministry," and conducted himself so outrageously that the Ministers threatened to resign. The Prince behaved well and with dignity, and in the end a compromise was arrived at, the King giving £50,000 a year out of the Civil List and Parliament granting £30,000 for the Prince's debts (he had already debts) and as much more for his outfit.

[1] "Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Richard Hurd," 1860

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The Prince was now in the enjoyment of his own income and of his separate establishment at Carlton House, which had been given him as a suitable residence. Carlton House stood opposite what is now Waterloo Place, looking northward. The fore court was separated from Pall Mall by a long range of columns; this colonnade screened the façade from the gaze of the vulgar. The palace was entered by a handsome Corinthian portico. The fine entrance hall and a great staircase with a railing glittering with gold led to several magnificent saloons, such as the state apartments, the cupola room, the rose satin drawing-room, and the armoury, said to be one of the finest in Europe. The Prince's private apartments were on the ground floor, looking over the gardens which ran as far as Marlborough House, and in the summer were a mass of leaf and bloom.[1]

Emancipated from parental control, the first use the Prince made of his freedom was to identify himself more closely than before with the principles of the Whig Party. He made a speech in the House of Lords in which he declared — "I exist by the love, friendship, and benevolence of the people, and their cause I will never forsake as long as I live." He attended the debates in the House of Commons, and showed his sympathy with the Whigs by noisily applauding their speeches. The King and the Tories made a great outcry about this, but as George III. was a violent partisan on the other side, and was secretly plotting the overthrow of his own (Whig) Government, it was hardly for him to rebuke the conduct of the Prince of Wales on this head.

The Coalition Ministry came suddenly and ignominiously to an end in December 1783, and the Prince's friends went out of office. The Prince took an eager part in the general election that followed in May 1784, especially on behalf of his friend Fox, the "man of the people," who stood for Westminster. The story of the Westminster election has been told too often to need re-telling here. The Prince turned Carlton House into a committee room for his friends, and the beautiful Duchess of Devonshire bought votes with her kisses. When Fox's name appeared at the head of the poll he was carried in procession

[1] Carlton House was pulled down in 1828 to make room for the central opening of Waterloo Place. Some of the Corinthian columns now help to form the portico of the National Gallery.

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KEW PALACE, WHERE GEORGE, PRINCE OF WALES, WAS BORN

CARLTON HOUSE, FACING PALL MALL

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to Carlton House in a chair wreathed with laurels and preceded by a banner inscribed "Sacred to Female Patriotism." The same night the Prince, arrayed in buff and blue, Fox's party colours, went to a supper party given by the fair and fascinating Mrs. Crewe in honour of the event. Fox was there and the Duchess of Devonshire, and all were arrayed in the same colours. The Prince gave the toast "True blue and Mrs. Crewe," to which the lady with ready wit replied by proposing "True blue and all of you." The Prince also celebrated Fox's victory a few days later at Carlton House by giving a magnificent *fête*. The young Prince showed to great advantage in his own house — no host ever did the honours more gracefully — and on this occasion the gentlemen, including the Prince himself, waited on the ladies at table before sitting down themselves. This *fête* was regarded by the Court as the climax of the Prince's insubordination. No notice was taken of his birthday at Windsor, and the King ranked him among his enemies.

The Prince did not take this mark of parental displeasure very much to heart, and found distraction in new gaieties and entertainments. Of all the brilliant, pleasure-loving crowd who at this time surrounded the Prince, undoubtedly the two persons who exercised the most influence over him were Fox and the Duchess of Devonshire.

Charles James Fox [1] was at this time about thirty-four years of age, and in the meridian of his fame and his great abilities. He had filled high offices under the Crown, and had been leader of the House of Commons and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. He had made his magnificent oration on the American War, and was famous in both hemispheres. He had inherited from his ancestor, Charles II., not only his swarthy, saturnine appearance, but also his love of vicious pleasures, more especially for gambling and women. He was stout, heavily built, and unwieldy, negligent in his dress and slovenly in his personal appearance. But when he smiled, or when he spoke, his whole being seemed transformed, and he won to his side all whom he would. He was a good friend — eager, warm-hearted, unselfish. His personal creed was frankly epicurean; in religious

[1] Charles James Fox (1749–1806), third son of Henry Fox, afterwards Lord Holland, and Lady Caroline Georgina, daughter of Charles Lennox, second Duke of Richmond, grandson of Charles II.

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matters he had no fixed belief. Yet in his political life he was a man of lofty ideals and high principles. Such was this remarkable man, the "my dear Charles" of so many of the young Prince's impassioned letters. The King strove in vain to break the friendship, and in an agony implored the Lord Chancellor, Thurlow, to tell him what he could do. "Sir," replied the surly Thurlow, "you will never have peace until you clap 'em both into the Tower."

The Duchess of Devonshire,[1] who was devoted heart and soul to Fox, also exercised an influence over the Prince, an influence social rather than political, though there was no keener politician than she. The King and Queen disliked the Duchess almost as much as Fox, but they could not show their displeasure to her in the same way. When the beautiful Georgiana condescended to grace their dull drawing-rooms with her presence they were bound to receive her with politeness, for the young Duchess of Devonshire was a very great lady, not only by virtue of her rank, but by reason of her vivid and inspiring personality. Nearly all contemporary accounts describe her charms as beyond compare. She was tall and most divinely fair, with deep blue eyes, and hair of a reddish tinge. Wraxall, who knew her well, says that the secret of her charm lay deeper than her beauty. "It lay in the amenity and graces of her deportment, her irresistible manners, and the seductions of her society. . . . In addition to the external advantages she had received from nature and fortune she possessed an ardent temper, susceptible of deep as well as strong impressions; a cultivated understanding, illuminated by a taste for poetry and the fine arts; much sensibility, not exempt, perhaps, from vanity and coquetry."[2] The Duchess, in short, was a brilliant paradox. On one side she was beautiful, graceful and witty, kind-hearted and philanthropic, full of generous impulses and high ideals; yet on the other she was incredibly reckless and foolish, willing to risk everything on the hazard of the moment; of a restless energy ever seeking something new, panting for notoriety, swayed by desire, living always for the hour with no thought beyond, yet beyond all words lovable.

[1] Georgiana (1757–1806), eldest daughter of the first Earl Spencer, married 1774 the fifth Duke of Devonshire.

[2] "Posthumous Memoirs of my own Time," by Sir Nathaniel Wraxall.

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This peerless creature had been married at seventeen to a husband who soon grew indifferent to her, a *grand seigneur*, whose constitutional apathy formed his most distinguishing characteristic. The young Prince of Wales was much influenced by the Duchess, whom he declared, not without reason, to be "the best bred woman in England." He consulted her on all matters of fashion and taste. It was she who helped him to choose the furniture and decorations of Carlton House, and when he revived masquerades, which had fallen into disfavour, it was with the Duchess that he opened the brilliant one at a club in St. James's Street. Devonshire House was the centre of Whiggism, and the Duchess was the Egeria of the party. The Prince of Wales was a constant frequenter of the parties at Devonshire House, which was then the resort not only of politicians but of all the wits and *beaux esprits* of the day.

Such was George, Prince of Wales, such his environment and his friends, when he thrust himself into the life of Mrs. Fitzherbert.

It is not possible to give the exact date when the Prince of Wales first saw Mrs. Fitzherbert, but we shall probably be not far wrong in assuming that it was some time during the year of his coming of age. Romance and tradition have it that they first met on the banks of the Thames at Richmond in the spring of 1783, when she was living quietly at Richmond and he was staying at Kew. Neither knew who the other was, but the Prince fell at once in love with the fair *incognita*. In the excitement and bustle consequent on his coming of age (August 1783) he appears to have lost sight of her for the time being. Yet she had made a deep impression on him. We read of the Prince at a dinner party at Lord Lewisham's about the time he attained his majority. The Prince had drunk deep, and after dinner fell into a gloomy reverie. Presently in one of those confidences with which he often honoured his friends, he bewailed his sad lot, and said he envied the Dukes of Devonshire and Rutland, who had been free to marry beautiful and clever women whom they loved. For his part he supposed he should be forced to marry some "ugly German frow." Then he turned to Rigby, Master of the Rolls, and asked him what he would advise him to do. "Faith, sir," answered Rigby,

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"I am not yet drunk enough to give advice to the Prince of Wales about marrying." The conversation showed that there was something on the Prince's mind, and before long that something was revealed.

According to another account the Prince first saw Mrs. Fitzherbert in Lady Sefton's box at the Opera, and was so struck with her unusual beauty that he had her followed home. The two accounts are not necessarily irreconcilable if we read the second to mean that it was the first time he saw her in London. This occasion must have been early in 1784. Mrs. Fitzherbert had come to London in March, and there is nothing more probable than that she should have been at the Opera with her relative, Lady Sefton, with whom she went everywhere at that time. But it is unlikely that the Prince, except for the mere love of intrigue, would have had the lady followed home, for Lady Sefton was well known to him, and he could have gone to her box and requested that Mrs. Fitzherbert should be presented to him. Besides, there were plenty who could have told him of the "lovely Fitzherbert," who, if she were not in the Prince's set, was a lady of the first fashion, who had already created a sensation by her beauty. The Prince was a connoisseur in female loveliness, but hers was of an unusual type. Her wealth of golden hair was unpowdered, the warm pallor of her cheeks was unrouged, her lustrous eyes were also innocent of art, and her sunny smile was guileless. She had not yet developed the perhaps too aquiline nose that came in later years, her profile was exquisite, and the curves of her beautiful figure were not yet marred by being too round.

The Prince always vowed that he fell in love with the lovely young widow at first sight, but then he vowed that of many. After their meeting, by whatever means effected, he took care not to lose sight of her again. He lost no time in becoming better acquainted with her; he eagerly sought her society, and found her not only beautiful, but gifted and attractive — attractive to him in a way no woman had been before. His passion increased by leaps and bounds. He made opportunities of meeting her, he followed her everywhere, he was always at her side, and his attentions to her were so marked that before long they became the most engrossing topic of fashionable conversation.

The Prince soon found that Mrs. Fitzherbert was of quite

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another calibre to the ladies whom he had hitherto honoured with his preference. At first she accepted his homage for what it was worth, and the marked attentions of the young and handsome Prince, with whom half the women in London were in love, flattered her vanity if it did not touch her heart. The Prince exerted himself to the utmost to please her, and his utmost was very good indeed, but she did not treat his devotion seriously. She insisted on regarding the gay and graceful badinage that passed between them as nothing more than the amusement of the passing hour, to be forgotten on the morrow. She trusted to her own good sense to keep his devotion within due limits, but the Prince did not recognise any limits where his passions were concerned. He grew more impetuous and more fervid, and opposition or evasion only served to make him keener. She could not parry an attack so ardent and so prolonged, her weapons of defence were beaten down one by one, until at last she was forced to realise that there was more behind his vows than mere gallantry, or the facile protestations of an amorous boy. Then she became alarmed, and strove too late to break off the acquaintance; but the Prince was not to be baffled — the more she opposed him the more persistent were his attentions. There was no extravagance of which he was not capable, and the lady began to be fearful lest her good name should become compromised. It did not matter what line she took, whether she met him with firmness and indifference, whether she besought him with tears and entreaties to leave her in peace, or met his vows with incredulity or ridicule. Whatever she did only served to inflame his ardour.

Mrs. Fitzherbert was at her wits' end how to escape the Prince's importunities. She did not leave London until the season was over, for she had many friends, she loved society, and was generally admired. She did not need the Prince's admiration to give a *cachet* to her social success, for it hindered rather than helped her. When she retired to her villa at Richmond in the summer he pursued her there, and contrived on some pretext or another to spend hours daily in her society. It is said that the popular ballad[1] —

> "I'd crowns resign to call thee mine,
> Sweet lass of Richmond Hill" —

[1] The ballad was sung at Vauxhall in 1789.

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was inspired by the Prince's devotion to Mrs. Fitzherbert which had by now become the talk of the town. But this seems open to doubt, for the lady was hardly "a lass" at the time, being in the twenty-eighth year of her age, and twice a widow. She was old enough certainly to see the folly of encouraging the Prince's devotion, and to realise that she had everything to lose and nothing to gain by such an entanglement. Whither could it lead? She had told him in the words Lady Waldegrave once used to the Duke of Gloucester, "that though she was too inconsiderable a person to become his wife, she was too considerable to become his mistress." The Duke of Gloucester had got over the difficulty by marrying the lady, who was now his duchess, but that marriage, though a clandestine one, was legal, as it took place before the Royal Marriage Act was passed. Moreover, the Duke of Gloucester was not the heir-apparent to the throne, and his duchess (a woman of inferior birth to Mrs. Fitzherbert) was a member of the Church of England. Mrs. Fitzherbert was a Roman Catholic by birth, education, and marriage, and she would not for any earthly consideration sacrifice her religion. She was a woman of high principles, of irreproachable virtue, of independent fortune and good position. It was a case of marriage or nothing at all; but since marriage was impossible, it would be better, she said, for the Prince to forget her. Her heart was touched, it was difficult to deny her love to one who pleaded so eloquently, and who vowed that he would abjure crown and kingdom for her sake, but she stood firm. At last she refused to see him, and gave no answer to his letters. "She resisted," we are told, "with the utmost anxiety and firmness the flattering assiduities of the most accomplished Prince of his age. She was well aware of the gulf that yawned beneath those flattering demonstrations of Royal adulation." [1]

So things went on until the autumn of 1784. The Prince had become almost beside himself with the extravagance of his passion. He vowed he could not, and would not, live without her. He passed days and nights in tears and violent emotion. His chosen friends in whom he confided were at a loss to know what to do to pacify him, and since he swore that nothing would

[1] Langdale, *op. cit.*

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GEORGE, PRINCE OF WALES

(*From the Painting by* THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH *at Aske, by permission of the* MARQUESS OF ZETLAND)

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satisfy him but to gain the object of his desire, they would have liked Mrs. Fitzherbert to waive her scruples and surrender at discretion. It was far from their interests to connive at a secret marriage between the Prince and Mrs. Fitzherbert. They knew that such a marriage was illegal by an Act of Parliament, which made the abettors liable to severe penalties, and if by any flaw the Act could be evaded and the union regarded as legal, it would expose the Prince to even greater dangers for having married a Roman Catholic. These considerations they put before the Prince, but he refused to listen to the voice of prudence. Remonstrances only made him more desperate. All his life he was subject to attacks of violent excitability, akin to the terrible illness from which his father suffered. Opposition to his desires goaded him to the point of madness. In this state he made not only his own life but the lives of every one around him unbearable, until at last, worn out by the intolerable strain, some of his confidential friends (and he had always some at hand ready to pander to his follies) thought they saw a way out of the difficulty. They hit upon an expedient — "some sort of ceremony" which, they hoped, would deceive the lady, and not be binding on the Prince — in fact a mock marriage. Something they felt had to be done, for the affair had reached an acute stage. Mrs. Fitzherbert, worn out by the Prince's importunities, and not sure what extravagance he might commit, perhaps not sure of herself, resolved to flee temptation and go abroad. This resolution reached the ears of the Prince and plunged him into the most violent agitation. A crisis arrived.

One morning in November 1784, when Mrs. Fitzherbert was in London making preparations for her journey, a coach drew up at the door of her house in Park Street, and four members of the Prince's household, Lord Onslow, Lord Southampton, Mr. Edward Bouverie,[1] and Keate, the surgeon, descended from it and demanded to see Mrs. Fitzherbert on urgent business. When she received them she saw that they were in the "utmost consternation." They informed her "that the life of the Prince was in imminent danger — that he had stabbed himself — and that only *her* immediate presence would save

[1] The Hon. Edward Bouverie, second son of first Viscount Folkestone, later M.P. for Northampton, *d.* 1810.

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him. She resisted in the most peremptory manner all their importunities, saying that nothing should induce her to enter Carlton House." [1] She well knew its reputation and suspected a trap. Still they implored her to come with them, and so save this precious life. It is probable that Keate, the surgeon, added his testimony as to the nature of the Prince's wound. Mrs. Fitzherbert became agitated and alarmed, but still she held back. She could not go alone with men to the house of her lover without risking her reputation. At last, between love and fear, she gave a half consent and said she would go, but on the indispensable condition that "some lady of high character" was found to accompany her. She may have thought of her relative, Lady Sefton, but we are told that the Duchess of Devonshire was selected. She was certainly more pliable than Lady Sefton, and was besides a friend of both Mrs. Fitzherbert and the Prince. This difficulty overcome, Mrs. Fitzherbert entered the coach which was waiting outside, and drove with the four men to Devonshire House. There she found the Duchess, who assented willingly, delighted at the idea of taking part in so romantic an adventure. Accompanied by the Duchess, Mrs. Fitzherbert drove to Carlton House, and was at once admitted to the Prince's presence. She found him in his private apartment on the ground floor, which overlooked the garden and St. James's Park. He was pale and covered with blood which issued from a wound in his side, the wound which his friends assured her had been self-inflicted by the Prince in consequence of her cruelty. According to the Prince, he had fallen upon his sword. According to another account, he had stabbed himself with a dagger. According to a third, he had tried to shoot himself, but hit the head of his bed instead; the pistol had been taken away from him, he then possessed himself of a table knife and drove it into his side. This would go to show that he was either half-mad or half-drunk, or, between the two, had worked himself up to a frenzy. The theory has also been put forward that the Prince had simply been "blooded" by Keate to relieve the violence of his passion, and he had dabbled the blood about his clothes to make himself look more interesting in the eyes of his beloved. However this

[1] Langdale, *op. cit.*

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may have been, he was successful in arousing her sympathies. The sight of her lover in such a plight so overcame Mrs. Fitzherbert that "she was deprived almost of consciousness." This was exactly what the Prince wanted. He pushed home his advantage by vowing that "nothing would induce him to live unless she promised to become his wife, and permitted him to put a ring round her finger." The frightened lady gave the promise, for she firmly believed that nothing else would save him from self-destruction, and a ring, one borrowed from the Duchess of Devonshire, who, with the men before mentioned, were interested witnesses of the scene, was put upon her finger, and so completed the ceremony. Mrs. Fitzherbert's acquiescence calmed the Prince, and trusting to her promise to be his wife he suffered her to depart. She drove back with the Duchess to Devonshire House, the four men following, and a deposition was drawn up, signed and sealed by each one of the party.[1]

When Mrs. Fitzherbert returned to her own house and could look back quietly over the events of the exciting day, she clearly saw that it was not a ceremony which could be binding either on her honour or her conscience. It was in short a mock marriage, and the four "gentlemen" who had planned it had conspired against her honour. From this conspiracy she exonerated the Prince, who had frequently expressed himself as ready and willing to marry her; then and all her life she believed that the Prince had sought to kill himself for her sake, and that nothing but her compliance with his wishes at the moment had saved him from self-destruction. Half a century later, when she narrated this extraordinary incident to her relative, Lord Stourton, he suggested "that some trick had been practised and that it was not really the blood of His Royal Highness," but she assured him to the contrary. She declared that "she had frequently seen the scar," [2] and added the not very convincing proof that some brandy-and-water was near his bedside. In her bewilderment she was not at the time a

[1] Mrs. Fitzherbert told Lord Stourton after George IV.'s death that "for all she knew to the contrary it [the deposition] might still be there." — Langdale, *op. cit.*

[2] The Rev. Johnes Knight also said that the Prince showed him the scar when he wanted him to perform the marriage between him and Mrs. Fitzherbert.

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very critical observer, and like the Prince she was of an excitable and emotional temperament. Like many another woman, even the most diffident, she cherished the secret belief that her lover would be ready to die for her sake. Her romantic sympathies were aroused, and she was touched by this proof of his devotion. But now that the immediate danger was over her fears on her own account returned with redoubled force. She realised her peril, and, always swayed by impulse, she resolved to carry out her intention of flight. She wrote a letter that same evening to Lord Southampton, denouncing the conduct of himself and his colleagues in enticing her to Carlton House. She protested against what had taken place there, and declared that, as she was taken by surprise, she could not be considered a free agent. The next morning she left England.

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CHAPTER IV

FLIGHT

(1784–1785)

MRS. FITZHERBERT went first to Aix-la-Chapelle, the ancient city of Charlemagne. In those days Aix-la-Chapelle was a favourite health resort, and much frequented by English as well as by foreign notabilities. The medicinal powers of its sulphur springs were famous all over Europe, and the comparative nearness of Aix-la-Chapelle to England made it a formidable rival to Bath and Cheltenham among English people as a resort, not only of health but of pleasure. Mrs. Fitzherbert visited Aix at intervals throughout her life. On this occasion she stayed there for some weeks, and on leaving she crossed the frontier to the neighbouring country of Holland and went to the Hague. The Hague was also a resort of English people, many of whom lived there, as they used to live at Breda, for motives of economy, a motive which did not enter in Mrs. Fitzherbert's case. But at this time there were comparatively few English at the Hague, for Holland was in an unsettled state, torn by conflicting parties within, and harassed from without by the opposing interests of France and England. France had encouraged the state to form a pure republic, independent of the Stadtholder, and so render it a French province. The English policy was to preserve the state's independence and to form an Anglo-Dutch alliance.

The Statdholder, who was a grandson of George II.,[1] favoured the English policy, and was anxious to strengthen his dynasty by an alliance between one of his daughters and the Prince of Wales. The Stadtholder was weak and vacillating, but his consort[2] was a high-spirited, clever and accomplished

[1] Anne, Princess Royal, the eldest daughter of George II., married in 1733 the Prince of Orange.

[2] The Princess of Orange was the daughter of Prince William Augustus of Prussia, and a niece of Frederick the Great.

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princess. Her domestic life was unhappy, and her public life one of perpetual anxiety. It is strange that Mrs. Fitzherbert should have elected to go to The Hague at a time when the country was on the verge of civil war, and the reigning family on the brink of ruin, but she probably had introductions to the court of Orange, for she was received with the greatest kindness by the Stadtholder and his family. The Stadtholder was proud of his descent from the Royal Family of Great Britain, and was always willing to welcome English people for their own sake. It would seem, however, that Mrs. Fitzherbert was admitted to terms of unusual intimacy, and the young Princess of Orange in particular, who wished to be Princess of Wales, honoured her with her confidence. Personal kinship and public interest marked the Princess out as a likely candidate, and she, knowing that Mrs. Fitzherbert was well known in the fashionable world of London, plied her with questions concerning the Prince and the English court, all unconscious of the fact that she was confiding in "her most dangerous rival." [1] The position was exceedingly embarrassing to Mrs. Fitzherbert. Of the Prince she knew much, a great deal more than she cared to say, but of the English court she could have known little more than any other woman of fashion who attended Queen Charlotte's drawing-rooms. She parried the questions of the would-be Princess of Wales as well as she could, and said nothing of what had passed between the Prince and herself. Indeed she saw, or thought she saw, in the possible alliance an escape from her own difficulties, and would willingly have furthered it if she could. She thus excused herself from any reflection of double-dealing. Of course she could do nothing either to help or hinder the union, and subsequent events proved that a marriage of policy, such as this, would have been a very slight obstacle in the path of the Prince of Wales where his desires were concerned. The projected marriage fell to the ground. In after years, when the Stadtholder was a fugitive in England, Mrs. Fitzherbert met both him and the Princess again. By that time her relations with the Prince of Wales were well known. The Princess of Orange good-humouredly acquitted her former friend of all blame (perhaps she thought

[1] Langdale, *op. cit.*

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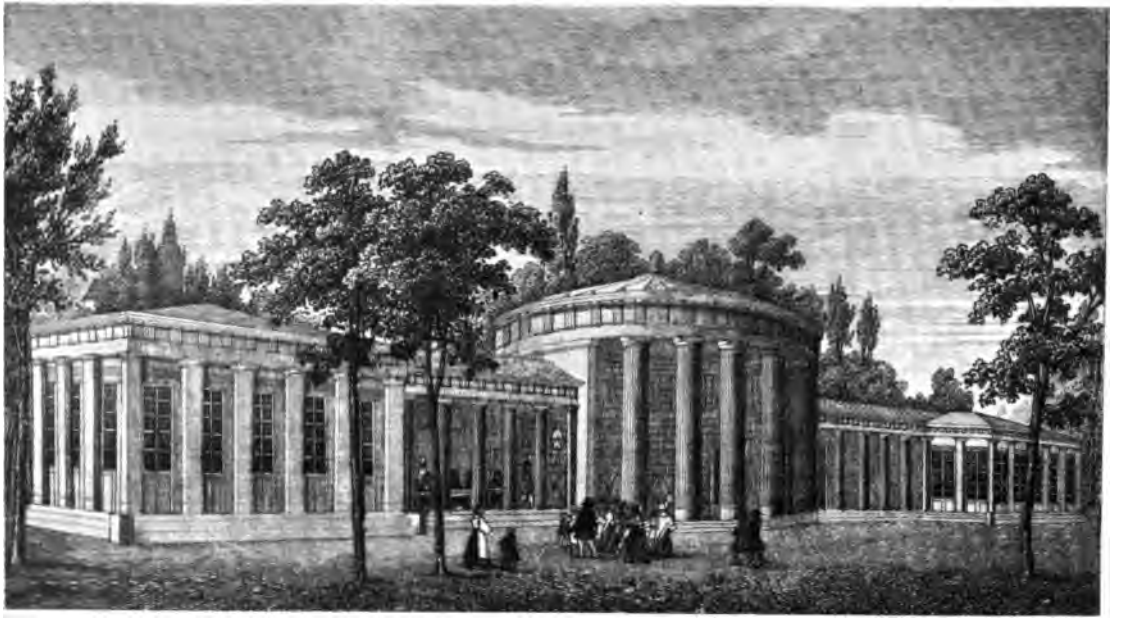

AIX-LA-CHAPELLE

WHITHER MRS. FITZHERBERT FLED IN 1784

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she had a lucky escape), but the Stadtholder treated Mrs. Fitzherbert with great coolness, and evidently attributed to her the failure of the match.

During Mrs. Fitzherbert's visit to The Hague, no hint of her entanglement with the Prince of Wales reached the court of Orange. The Stadtholder treated her with every courtesy, and when she brought her sojourn to a close he placed his state barge at her disposal to convey her to Antwerp. The cause which probably led Mrs. Fitzherbert to take her departure from The Hague, where she was so well received, was the arrival there, at the end of December 1784, of Sir James Harris,[1] who had been accredited British Minister to the court of Orange. Harris was an able diplomatist, an astute man of the world, and a consummate courtier; he was honoured by the confidence of George III. and Queen Charlotte, who often employed him in private matters with regard to their troublesome family. He was also on terms of intimate friendship with the Prince of Wales, and the story of the Prince's devotion to Mrs. Fitzherbert must have been well known to him. Mrs. Fitzherbert therefore did not care to meet him at this juncture, and hastened her departure from The Hague in order to avoid him.

She went first to Paris; but as she sought retirement, she did not stay there long. Early in 1785 we hear of her in Switzerland, and then a little later at Plombiers in Lorraine. At Plombiers we must leave her for a time and return to the Prince of Wales.

The day after the scene at Carlton House the Prince of Wales "went down into the country to Lord Southampton's for change of air." After the violent paroxysm he had undergone, and weakness from loss of blood, a few days' quiet must have been necessary. He was probably advised to let Mrs. Fitzherbert rest a while, and renew the attack on his return to London. But his plans were baffled. Lord Southampton received the letter Mrs. Fitzherbert wrote to him the day before she left England, and he communicated it to the Prince. We can imagine the outburst of rage and emotion with which the royal lover received the news. According to Lord Holland,

[1] James Harris, first Earl of Malmesbury (1746–1820).

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"he did not conceal his passion, or his despair at her leaving England for the Continent." [1]

His first thought was to follow her, but Mrs. Fitzherbert had crossed the Channel before the news reached him, and he had no trace of her hiding-place. Besides, the heir-apparent could not leave the country without the consent of the King. That consent with passionate eagerness he now sought to obtain. He based his request on the ground of his heavy debts and his wish to retrench. The King, who had heard of his son's infatuation for the "lovely Fitzherbert," did not accede to the Prince's prayer, but he affected to temporise, and seized the opportunity to demand from the Prince a full statement of his debts, giving him to understand that if such a statement were supplied he might liquidate them — an understanding which he had no intention of carrying out.

Thus matters went on for several months, the King keeping the Prince in suspense, the Prince pining to get away. All this time the unfortunate youth, worried by his pecuniary embarrassments, and distracted by his apparently hopeless passion, was in a state bordering on unreason. He was one who could not keep his sorrows to himself. All his friends, especially the Duchess of Devonshire and Fox, were the recipients of his woes, and they offered him consolation in vain. To again quote Lord Holland: "Mrs. Fox [then Mrs. Armitstead], who was living at St. Anne's [Chertsey], has repeatedly assured me that he came down thither more than once to converse with her and Mr. Fox on the subject, that he cried by the hour, that he testified to the sincerity and violence of his passion and his despair by the most extravagant expressions and actions, rolling on the floor, striking his forehead, tearing his hair, falling into hystericks, and swearing that he would abandon the country, forego the crown, sell his jewels and plate, and scrape together a competence to fly with the object of his affections to America." [2]

This last must be regarded as an exaggeration of speech, for it is certain that the lady would not have fled with him to America, even if he had been free to propose it. But the scene goes to show that Mrs. Fitzherbert had based her rejection of

[1] "Posthumous Memoirs of the Whig Party," by Lord Holland, 1852.
[2] "Memoirs of the Whig Party," *op. cit.*

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her lover's advances on the plea of his position, and not on the ground of her indifference, or want of affection. Her heart was already his, and she was not following its promptings, but considering his interests in removing herself out of his reach. If he suffered, she suffered too. It was hard that she should be driven into exile, separated from her family and friends, and compelled to seek refuge in an obscure foreign town like a fugitive hiding from justice. She was fighting a battle between her duty and her inclination. Knowing the fickleness of men in general, and of princes in particular, she thought (though she did not in her heart hope) that if she kept away long enough her lover would forget her. The Prince of Wales was notoriously changeable, and easily attracted by the "Cynthia of the minute." But in his early devotion to Maria Fitzherbert, in all fairness be it said, he showed a constancy, a firmness, and a persistency worthy of all praise, and not at all in keeping with the fickle character generally attributed to him. There is no doubt that his love for her was deep and genuine, and that it was the great passion of his life. She was in truth the only woman whom he ever really loved.

Foiled in his attempt to follow Mrs. Fitzherbert, the Prince set himself to discover her hiding-place. In this he was more successful. He despatched emissaries far and wide, and, aided by the Duke of Orleans, he soon discovered where she was concealed. Having once found her, he had her shadowed wherever she went. Then began a ceaseless correspondence. He wrote to her pages and pages of passionate pleadings, of heartrending appeals, of prayers for her aid, of threats of self-destruction if she remained obdurate — of everything in short that could touch or move the heart of a susceptible woman. The Prince could write admirable letters when he wished, no one better, letters full of grace of phrase and felicity of diction, and in these epistles his unrivalled powers of persuasion and sophistry came into full play. Whether Mrs. Fitzherbert answered his letters or not, or how she answered them, made no difference. Whether she moved from Paris to Switzerland, or from Switzerland to Lorraine, she was still followed by the Prince's emissaries, and by his letters. "Couriers after couriers," we are told, "passed through France carrying the letters and propositions of the Prince to her in France and Switzerland.

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The Duke of Orleans was the medium of this correspondence. The speed of the couriers exciting the suspicions of the French Government, three of them were at different times put in prison." [1] They were arrested on suspicion of being concerned in some political plot, but the Duke of Orleans was soon able to make it clear that they were only the messengers of Cupid. Otherwise it is possible that Mrs. Fitzherbert might have become a suspect too. Even the influence of the Duke of Orleans did not shield her wholly from the suspicion of political intrigue. We find, many years after, her enemies in England declaring "that she had been in correspondence in France with the Gros Abbé, the bastard brother of the Duke of Orleans, the Abbé Taylor and some Irish friars in many parts of Italy. The aim of this correspondence was said to be to harass the existing administration (Mr. Pitt's) and to pave the way for the introduction of Catholicism into England." [2] These falsehoods were on the face of them absurd. Mrs. Fitzherbert was the last woman in the world to proselytise or to concern herself in intrigues, political or ecclesiastical; but to such imputations she was exposed by the reckless proceedings of the Prince of Wales.

Excuse may be found in the violence of the Prince's passion. That he was at this time "willing to make any sacrifice" [3] to gain her is true, in substance and in fact. As the object of his desire would not come to him, his one wish was to go to her. He seems to have had it in his mind to offer her a morganatic marriage according to the laws of Hanover, and to live quietly with her abroad, perhaps in Hanover. He strove to overcome his father's obstinacy by promising to reform and retrench if he were allowed to go abroad. But the King now met his son's demand with an uncompromising refusal. He had played with him for months, and obtained a full account of his debts, except for one item which the Prince said he was unable to account for in detail, pleading that it was "a debt of honour." The King seized upon this as an excuse for refusing to pay any

[1] Langdale, *op. cit.*

[2] "Letter of Nemesis to Alfred," a scurrilous pamphlet published *circa* 1789. It was written by the Rev. Philip Wither, who styles himself "Chaplain to the Dowager Lady Hereford," but was better known as a writer of political pamphlets. He was condemned to imprisonment in Newgate for gross libel, and died therein, before his term of imprisonment had expired.

[3] Holland, *op. cit.*

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of them, saying that "if it were a debt the Prince was ashamed to explain it was one he ought not to pay." [1] The Prince, enraged at this treatment, thought he saw in his father's refusal an excuse to escape abroad. The King dared him to leave the kingdom without his leave, and even taunted him, so the Prince afterwards said, with his impotence to reach Mrs. Fitzherbert. The King's taunts only made him more desperate.

The Prince on April 27, 1785, sent for Sir James Harris, who was then in London on leave of absence, and after giving him an account of the King's treatment, he declared that in the matter of his debts "he saw no means of relief left but by getting abroad." He asked Harris about The Hague, whether he [the Prince] could go there in a private character, and if so how he, as the King's representative, would receive him. From this it would seem that the Prince knew Mrs. Fitzherbert had been in that city, and thought she would shortly be returning there. But he did not once mention her name to Harris in the curious conversation that followed,[2] though it was at the back of everything he said. To the Prince's question the adroit diplomatist replied: —

"I should be very sorry, Sir, to see you in Holland otherwise than in a character which would allow me to receive you in a manner conformable with the respect and affection I bear your Royal Highness; but your coming abroad without your having obtained the King's consent implies that you will come after it has been refused you, and, you may rest assured, in that case I shall receive orders how to act towards you before your arrival; and those orders, let them be ever so much in contradiction to my feelings, I must obey.

"*Prince.* Certainly. I should be the last person to wish you to do otherwise. But what am I to do? Am I to be refused the right of every individual? Cannot I travel legally, as a private man, without the King's consent?

"*Harris.* I think it very immaterial for your Royal High-

[1] "Diaries and Correspondence of James Harris, First Earl of Malmesbury," 1844.

[2] The conversation is quoted in full, only abbreviating some of the speeches of the pompous Harris which had nothing to do with the case. Those who wish to read it in full will find it in the "Malmesbury Diaries."

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ness to know whether you can, or cannot, legally travel without His Majesty's consent; since it is evident that you cannot with any propriety to the public, or satisfaction to yourself, cross the seas without it.

"*Prince.* Why not? I wish to travel on a plan of economy; to be unknown; to live in retirement.

"*Harris.* Without entering into the almost impossibility of your Royal Highness making so rapid a transition in your ways of life, I confess I see no event would give me so much pain, as an Englishman, as to see a Prince of Wales abroad under such a description. . . .

"*Prince.* I feel what you say: but what can I do? The King proposed to me to lay by £10,000 a year to pay my debts, at a time when, with the strictest economy, my expenses are twice my income. I am ruined if I stay in England. I disgrace myself as a man.

"*Harris.* Your Royal Highness, give me leave to say, will find no relief in travelling the way you propose. You will be either slighted, or, what is worse, become the object of political intrigue at every court you pass through. . . .

"*Prince.* But if I avoid all great courts? If I keep to the smaller ones of Germany, can this happen? I may there live unnoticed and unknown.

"*Harris.* Impossible, Sir. The title of the Earl of Chester will be only a mask which covers the Prince of Wales, and, as such, your actions will ever be judged. . . .

"*Prince.* You think I mean to go to France. I shall keep to the Empire, and perhaps to Italy.

"*Harris.* What I say applies to all countries, Sir. . . .

"*Prince.* But what can I do, my dear Harris? *The King hates me.* He wants to set me at variance with my brother. I have no hopes from him. He won't let even Parliament assist me till I marry.

"*Harris.* But there exists so cordial an affection between your Royal Highness and the Duke of York, that I should think he might be employed most usefully to reconcile the King to your Royal Highness. It cannot be a difficult task when undertaken by a brother.

"*Prince.* If he thought it possible, he would come over [from Hanover] immediately. He has often expressed his con-

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cern at our disunion, and declares he never will leave the Continent till he can see a prospect of bringing the King to enter into my situation.

"*Harris.* Surely, Sir, the King could not object to any increase of income Parliament thought proper to allow your Royal Highness?

"*Prince.* I believe he would. *He hates me; he always did, from seven years old.*

"*Harris.* His Majesty *may* be displeased and dissatisfied with your Royal Highness, but surely he cannot hate you; and I am convinced nothing would make both him and the Queen so happy as to restore their affections to you. It would be the greatest blessing to the nation, and the greatest comfort to the Royal Family.

"*Prince.* It may be so, but it cannot be. We are too wide asunder ever to meet. The King has deceived me, he has made me deceive others; I cannot trust him, and he will never believe me.

"*Harris.* I am sorry your Royal Highness thinks so. But I think your Royal Highness should try every possible means before you carry into execution your plan of travelling.

"*Prince.* I will think it over, but I see no obstacle. We will meet again soon." [1]

After this conversation, Harris, who was honoured with the confidence both of the father and the son, tried hard to effect a reconciliation between them, and to induce the King to settle the Prince's debts, but he underrated the strength of the cross currents of personal hatred and political intrigue. Pitt, the Prime Minister, who felt that some of the money would be spent on political purposes against the Government, refused to do anything for the Prince of Wales, unless he would first break with Fox and the Opposition. In this attitude he was supported, if not instigated, by the King, who added to his hatred of the Whigs, jealousy of his eldest son. The Prince knew that he could never satisfy his father, do what he would, and he refused to sacrifice his friends, and humiliate himself in vain. Harris, who was still sanguine that he could arrange matters, on the strength of certain vague assurances which he had

[1] "Malmesbury Diaries:" My First Conference with the Prince of Wales.

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received from the King, requested another interview with the Prince of Wales, which was granted.

During the month which had elapsed since his last conversation with Harris a change had come over the Prince. Perhaps Mrs. Fitzherbert had written to him, refusing to listen to him if he came abroad, entreating him for his own sake not to come. Or perhaps she even held out the hope if he would hearken to her counsels she would return to England. Something, it is impossible to say what, must have passed between them in the interval, above and beyond the remonstrances of the Prince's friends, for when, by appointment, on May 23, Harris entered the Prince's dressing-room at Carlton House for a second interview, he was greeted with these words:[1] —

"*Prince.* If you are come, my dear Harris, to dissuade me again from travelling, let me anticipate your kind intentions by telling you I have dismissed that idea from my mind. I see all my other friends, as well as yourself, are against it, and I subscribe to their opinion.

"*Harris.* I should not have presumed to have mentioned that subject again to your Royal Highness; but after what you have told me, Sir, allow me to express my infinite satisfaction.

"*Prince.* I am glad to have pleased *you*, at least, if I have not pleased myself. Yet I am sure you will be concerned to see the distressed and unbecoming light in which I must appear by remaining in England.

"*Harris.* This had better appear here (admitting it to be the case) than to strangers. But, Sir, the purport of my troubling your Royal Highness was to obviate this unpleasant circumstance."

Harris then proceeded to propound his scheme for the settlement of the Prince's debts, which, as it came to nothing, it is unnecessary to detail here. The Prince listened in silence, and then said: —

"I thank you; but it will not do. I tell you the King hates me. He would turn out Pitt for entertaining such an idea; besides, I cannot abandon Charles and my friends.

"*Harris.* Mr. Fox and the Duke of Portland have told me often, Sir, that they by no means wish your Royal Highness

[1] The following conversation is also abridged so far as Sir James Harris is concerned.

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to condescend, on their account, to take any share in party concerns. They have repeatedly declared that a Prince of Wales ought to be of no party.

"*Prince.* Well, but admitting this, and supposing that I can get rid of a partiality in politics you seem to condemn, I tell you, Harris, the King never will listen to it.

"*Harris.* But, Sir, I presuppose a reconciliation between you and His Majesty. Surely this would be grateful to the King himself, and most particularly so to the Queen.

"*Prince.* Why, my dear Harris, will you force me to repeat to you that the *King hates me?* He will never be reconciled to me.

"*Harris.* It cannot be, Sir. If you order me, I will ask an audience of him, and fling myself at his feet.

"*Prince.* I love you too well to encourage you to undertake so useless a commission. If you will not credit me, you will, perhaps, credit the King himself. Take and read all our correspondence for these last six months.

"The Prince here opened an escritoire, and took out a large bundle of papers, which he read to me. It consisted of various letters which had passed between him and the King, beginning with the one in which he asked his leave to go abroad in autumn 1784.

"It is needless to attempt to relate precisely the contents of this correspondence; it is sufficient to observe that the Prince's letters were full of respect and deference, written with great plainness of style and simplicity. Those of the King were also well written, but harsh and severe; constantly refusing every request the Prince made, and reprobating in each of them his extravagance and dissipated manner of living. They were void of every expression of parental kindness or affection; and, after both hearing them read, and perusing them myself, I was compelled to subscribe to the Prince's opinion, and to confess there was very little appearance of making any impression on His Majesty in favour of His Royal Highness. I resumed, however, the conversation as follows: —

"*Harris.* I am hurt to a degree, Sir, at what I have read. But still, Sir, the Queen must have a reconciliation so much at heart, that, through her and your sisters, it surely might be effected.

"*Prince.* Look ye, Harris; I cannot bring myself to say

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I am in the wrong when I am in the right. The King has used me ill; and I wish the public knew what you now know, and was to pronounce between us.

"*Harris.* I should be very sorry, indeed, Sir, if this was known beyond these walls; for I am much mistaken if the public would not pronounce a judgment widely different from that you think.

"*Prince.* This is a cruel truth, if it be true what you say; but it is of no use to investigate it; my case never will go to that tribunal.

"*Harris.* May I suggest, Sir, the idea of your marrying? It would, I should think, be most agreeable to the King, and, I am certain, most grateful to the nation.

"*Prince (with vehemence).* I never will marry! My resolution is taken on that subject. I have settled it with Frederick. No, I never will marry!

"*Harris.* Give me leave to say, Sir, most respectfully, that you cannot have really come to such a resolution; and you *must* marry, Sir. You owe it to the country, to the King, to yourself.

"*Prince.* I owe nothing to the King. Frederick will marry, and the crown will descend to his children; and as for myself, I do not see how it affects me.

"*Harris.* Till you are married, Sir, and have children, you have no solid hold on the affections of the people, even while you are Prince of Wales; but if you come to the throne a bachelor, and His Royal Highness the Duke of York is married, and has sons to succeed you, your situation, when King, will be more painful than it is at this moment. Our own history furnishes strong examples of the truth of what I say.

"The Prince was greatly struck with this observation. He walked about the room, apparently angry. I moved towards the door, saying, 'I perceive, Sir, I have said too much: you will allow me to withdraw. I am sure I shall be forgiven an hour hence.'

"*Prince.* You are forgiven now, my dear Harris. I am angry with myself, not with you. Don't question me any more. I will think of what you said. Adieu. God bless you."[1]

The most remarkable passage in this conversation was the

[1] "Malmesbury Diaries": My Second Conference with the Prince of Wales.

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Prince's vehement declaration that he would never marry, and that he had "settled it with Frederick." By this he meant that he would never make a marriage of policy after the manner of princes, or a marriage in accordance with the terms of his father's recently passed Royal Marriage Act, and he made this declaration, be it noted, at a time when not only the King and the Government, but also his political and personal friends, were agreed in urging him to contract such an alliance. His declaration shows that he had by this time fully determined to offer Mrs. Fitzherbert such a marriage as it was in his power to offer her — a marriage which the law of England would treat as illegal, and which in Hanover would be regarded as morganatic — that is to say, though recognised as a marriage, it would not give the wife the rank of her husband.[1] The Prince had this in mind when he said "Frederick will marry, and the crown will descend to his children," for he knew that if he had any children by his contemplated marriage with Mrs. Fitzherbert, they would be deemed incapable of succeeding to the throne of England, and would be treated as *infantes nullius*, or dead in law.[2]

Harris did not realise the full force of the Prince's words at the time. He was astonished at the summary rejection of his well-meant efforts; but later, when the rumour of the Prince's marriage to Mrs. Fitzherbert reached his ears, it became clear to him that the idea was in the Prince's mind when he spoke with him, and that Mrs. Fitzherbert was "the great obstacle in the way of his accepting my proposal."[3]

All this time Mrs. Fitzherbert remained in Lorraine, shadowed by the Prince's spies, and the recipient of his continued letters. Still she tried, with a force ever growing feebler, to fight off his assault. But she was getting tired of her self-imposed exile, and presently an incident occurred which convinced her that it was impossible for this state of affairs to continue indefinitely.

[1] Such a marriage was that of his ancestor, Duke George William of Celle, with Eleanore d'Olbreuse, mother of Sophia Dorothea.

[2] What their claims might have been to the crown of Hanover need not be discussed here, as none were born.

[3] The Prince wrote later (1799) to Mrs. Fitzherbert that Harris had been informed by him "of every, even the minutest, circumstance of our marriage."

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Despite the strict retirement in which she lived she became the object of the attentions of the notorious Marquis de Bellois, who offered her marriage. The Marquis was one of the handsomest men in France, and one of the most polished and accomplished scoundrels in Europe. The young English widow, beautiful, well-connected and well-dowered, was a fair mark for a needy French nobleman. She refused him in the most uncompromising manner, and when, despite her refusal, he continued to urge his suit, she left Plombiers for Paris. She had fled from England to protect her reputation, but this affair showed her that she had only escaped one danger to encounter another. She was too young and too beautiful a woman to continue to live alone and unprotected in a foreign country, away from her family and her friends. That she had lived abroad all these months, surrounded by an atmosphere of secrecy, was no fault of her own, but it served to whet the tongue of scandal. Why all this mystery, people asked, unless there was something wrong? She had done nothing to be ashamed of, yet she could not explain her position without compromising others. Besides, her explanation would be received with scornful incredulity by the gay world of Paris and of London, who would neither understand nor respect her scruples. Moreover, she was of a temperament which could not bear to live alone. Though not devoted to pleasure, she was fond of society and amusement, and enjoyed the companionship of her friends. She reflected also that, so far, her object in going abroad had signally failed, for time and distance only seemed to make the Prince more eager. Herein may be found the first hint of her yielding.

It is impossible to sketch accurately the combination of circumstances by which, little by little, Mrs. Fitzherbert's resistance was beaten down. She began to hesitate, and hesitating was lost. "Wrought upon and fearful," she was first "induced to promise formally and deliberately that she would never marry any other person." [1] From promising to marry no one but the Prince, to promising to marry him was only a step. But before taking it she stipulated for conditions which would satisfy her conscience. The Prince, who had no con-

[1] Langdale, *op. cit.*

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science at all where his desires were concerned, was willing to grant her everything in his power. She had not been satisfied with the grotesque ceremony at Carlton House, then he would offer her a real marriage, as real as he could make it, one that would satisfy her scruples and meet the requirements of her Church. More than that she did not ask, and more than that he could not give, for the Royal Marriage Act lay athwart their path. She knew of this Act as well as he, and with him was willing to risk the danger of violating it, but still she hesitated. She was unwilling to encourage this prodigal son into a flagrant act of disobedience to the wishes of his father. The Prince was ready to meet this scruple, as he had met the others, by his sophistry which never failed. In a letter of abnormal length (thirty-seven pages), [1] for he was always a man of many words, he assured her that "his father would connive at the union." This of course was not true, but perhaps the Prince persuaded himself that it was, for he had extraordinary powers of self-deception. It is impossible to believe that the King would have connived at the violation of the Act which he had forced through Parliament only thirteen years before, framed to prevent just such a marriage as this. He was a conscientious man, and would not have thus stultified himself. But with the Prince of Wales it was a settled conviction that his father hated him, and would gladly have seen him supplanted by his younger brother, the Duke of York. "I have settled it all with Frederick," he told Harris; "Frederick will marry, and the crown will descend to his children." The Prince may have thought that the King would wink at his irregular and morganatic marriage in order to bring about such a consummation.

But whether the Prince believed what he wrote or not, his word was all-sufficient for Mrs. Fitzherbert. The time had not come when she had learned to lament his fatal disregard of truth. She believed implicitly all he told her, and all his promises and vows. She could no longer doubt the sincerity of his love. He had endured a long and cruel probation; she had kept away from him, and had resisted all his prayers and importunities, for more than a year, and yet at the end of the period his love for her was unchanged. He had answers for

[1] Lord Stourton says that Mrs. Fitzherbert showed him this letter "entirely in the handwriting of the Prince."

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all her objections, he granted all her stipulations, he was willing to risk everything for her sake. She could not change her religion, and therefore the Prince, by marrying a Roman Catholic (even though the marriage might be illegal), ran the risk of forfeiting his right of succession to the crown.[1] It was said that Mrs. Fitzherbert did not realise this until later, but she knew, none better, the strong prejudice against Roman Catholics in England. She knew, too, how much the Prince would damage his popularity by allying himself intimately with one of her faith, even though the connection were to the world not an honourable one. How much greater, then, would be the outcry if their secret marriage ever became known? It was largely for this reason that she had withstood him so long; but since he was willing to take the risk for her sake, she was not the woman to deny him from fear of the consequences to herself. And so, at last, worn out with his pleading, and moved by the chivalry of his devotion, she threw down her arms, and promised to return to England and become his wife. It was no hasty, ill-considered action, for she saw, we are told, "clearly and justly that she was about to plunge into inextricable difficulties; but having insisted upon conditions, such as would satisfy her conscience and justify her in the eyes of her own Church, she abandoned herself to her fate."[2] Once she surrendered she knew no half measures; she might have extracted any terms she pleased from the infatuated Prince, but with a rare disinterestedness, she asked for nothing beyond the one condition demanded by her conscience and her Church. She left everything else to the honour of the man to whom she was henceforth to devote her life.

It will always be an enigma what induced a woman of Mrs. Fitzherbert's temperament and character to yield at the last. What led this pure and proud woman, with her definite ideas of right and wrong, to consent to an act which, if not wrong in itself, was at least capable of wrongful interpretation? But one thing at least is clear. Her motives were not interested. Perhaps she persuaded herself that she must make the sacrifice for his sake; perhaps she deluded herself that she was necessary to him — this headstrong, passionate, lovable youth, whose

[1] Section IX. of the Act of Settlement, 1689.
[2] Langdale, *op. cit.*

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faults appeared to be all on the surface, and who was his own worst enemy. Perhaps she conceived it was her mission to rescue him from his evil advisers, and make him worthy of the high position which he was one day destined to fill. It may be, too, that her heart now spoke for the first time. She had been twice married before to men years older than herself, and these marriages were probably arranged for her by others; the union she now contemplated was not a marriage of convenience but of pure romance. There were in this adventure all the elements of romance, of secrecy, and of danger. A Prince, young and handsome as an Apollo, a lover passionate and ardent, laid his heart at her feet. She would have been less a woman had she spurned it. She was weary of her self-imposed exile, weary of the loneliness of her life. There had come to her that hunger that comes sooner or later to every man and woman, the desire to take happiness with both hands, and count the world well lost — the desire to know, even though it be for one brief hour, the heart of life. And this it may be claimed for Maria Fitzherbert, that despite all the suffering and disappointment of after years she at least had her hour.

Thus it follows that, after all, the simplest explanation of her yielding is the truest. She yielded because she loved him.

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CHAPTER V

SURRENDER

(1785)

MRS. FITZHERBERT returned to England the first week of December 1785, after an exile of more than a year's duration. She travelled through to London, and went to her house in Park Street. It is said, on questionable authority, that the Prince of Wales went to Paris *incognito* and had an interview with Mrs. Fitzherbert, with the result that she consented to accompany him back to England.[1] It is unlikely that this took place, but it is probable that he went down to Dover to meet her, and escorted her to London, which would account for the rumour. Care was taken to prevent her return becoming known, but, before long, every one interested knew that she had come back. The Prince's household suspected that something unusual was taking place. There was an air of suppressed excitement about everything the Prince said and did which could not pass unnoticed, and when it became known that Mrs. Fitzherbert had returned from abroad, all in his immediate service felt that the state of uncertainty and unrest in which he had lived for the last year was nearing its end. There was not one of the Prince's real friends who did not contemplate with alarm the possibility of such a marriage, but the Prince was surrounded by parasites and flatterers, who were ready to aid and abet him on a course imprudent for himself and disastrous for the woman he loved. Others there were of his boon companions, reckless young "bloods," ever ready for an affair of gallantry, who, seeing that he was not to be dissuaded, fell in with his mood.

The Prince was not one who could keep a secret, and in

[1] Another rumour was that he had crossed from Brighton to Dieppe in the summer. Mrs. Fitzherbert met him there, and he had come to an arrangement with her then.

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GEORGE, PRINCE OF WALES, AS "FLORIZEL"

(*After the Painting by* RICHARD COSWAY, R.A.)

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this case he had to take two or three persons into his confidence, in order to make arrangements for his marriage. Though silence is a word written large over the gates of palaces, a secret which is known to two or three persons is soon a secret no longer. It is probable that some well-wisher of the Prince, who was in his confidence, so far betrayed him as to communicate with Fox, and urge him to do what he could to persuade the Prince from marrying Mrs. Fitzherbert. Fox was one of the first to hear of Mrs. Fitzherbert's arrival in London, and he regarded the news as serious. He knew from the Prince himself of his reckless passion and her prolonged resistance, and he felt that she would not have returned to England unless a way had been found to overcome her scruples. Moreover, the fact that the Prince had lately avoided him lent weight to his suspicions, that marriage and nothing else was in the Prince's mind. He resolved to make an effort to prevent such an act of folly, and without delay wrote the following letter: —

The Right Hon. C. J. Fox, M.P., to H.R.H. the Prince of Wales.

"*Dec.* 10, 1785.

"SIR, — I hope that your Royal Highness does me the justice to believe that it is with the utmost reluctance that I trouble you with my opinion unasked at any time, much more so upon a subject where it may not be agreeable to your wishes. I am sure that nothing could ever make me take this liberty, but the condescension which you have honoured me with upon so many occasions, and the zealous and grateful attachment that I feel for your Royal Highness, and which makes me run the risk even of displeasing you for the purpose of doing you a real service.

"I was told just before I left town yesterday, that Mrs. Fitzherbert was arrived; and if I had heard only this, I should have felt most unfeigned joy at an event which I knew would contribute so much to your Royal Highness's satisfaction; but I was told at the same time, that from a variety of circumstances which had been observed and put together, there was reason to suppose that you were going to take the very desperate step (pardon the expression) of marrying her at this moment. If such an idea be really in your mind, and it be not now too late,

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for God's sake let me call your attention to some considerations, which my attachment to your Royal Highness, and the real concern which I take in whatever relates to your interest, have suggested to me, and which may possibly have the more weight with you when you perceive that Mrs. Fitzherbert is equally interested in most of them with yourself.

"In the first place, you are aware that a marriage with a Catholic throws the Prince contracting such a marriage out of the succession of the Crown.[1] Now, what change may have happened in Mrs. Fitzherbert's sentiments upon religious matters I know not; but I do not understand that any public profession of change has been made: and surely, Sir, this is not a matter to be trifled with; and your Royal Highness must excuse the extreme freedom with which I write. If there should be a doubt about her previous conversion,[2] consider the circumstances in which *you* stand; the King not feeling for you as a father ought, the Duke of York professedly his favourite, and likely to be married agreeably to the King's wishes; the nation full of its old prejudices against Catholicks, and justly dreading all disputes about succession. In all these circumstances your enemies might take such advantage as I shudder to think of; and though your generosity might think no sacrifice too great to be made to a person whom you love so entirely, consider what *her* reflections must be in such an event, and how impossible it would be for her ever to forgive herself.

"I have stated this danger upon the supposition that the marriage would be a real one; but your Royal Highness knows as well as I, that according to the present laws of the country it *cannot;*[3] and I need not point out to your good sense what a source of uneasiness it must be to you, to her, and above all to the nation, to have it a matter of dispute and discussion, whether the Prince of Wales is, or is not, married. All speculations on the feelings of the publick are uncertain; but I doubt much whether an uncertainty of this kind, by keeping men's

[1] *Vide* Section IX. of the Act of 1689. "An Act for declaring the rights and liberties of the subject, and settling the succession to the Crown."

[2] *i.e.* to the Church of England. But Mrs. Fitzherbert had not been "converted."

[3] Fox here alludes to the Royal Marriage Act of 1772, which prevented the Prince from marrying before the age of twenty-five without the consent of the King.

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minds in perpetual agitation upon a matter of this moment, might not cause a greater ferment than any other possible situation. If there should be children from the marriage, I need not say how much the uneasiness (as well of yourself as of the nation) must be aggravated. If anything could add to the weight of these considerations, it is the impossibility of remedying the mischiefs I have alluded to; for if your Royal Highness should think proper, when you are twenty-five years old, to notify to Parliament your intention to marry (by which means *alone* a *legal* marriage can be contracted), in what manner can it be notified? If the previous marriage is mentioned or owned, will it not be said that you have set at defiance the laws of your country; and that you now come to Parliament for a sanction for what you have already done in contempt of it? If there are children, will it not be said that we must look for future applications to legitimate them, and consequently be liable to disputes for the succession between the eldest son, and the eldest son *after* the legal marriage? And will not the entire annulling of the whole marriage be suggested as the most secure way of preventing all such disputes? If the marriage is not mentioned to Parliament, but yet is known to have been solemnised, as it certainly will be known, if it takes place, these are the consequences — First, that at all events any child born in the interim is immediately illegitimated; and next, that arguments will be drawn from the circumstances of the concealed marriage against the publick one. It will be said, that a woman who has lived with you as your wife without being so, is not fit to be Queen of England;[1] and thus the very thing that is done for the sake of her reputation will be used against it: and what would make this worse would be, the marriage being known (though not officially communicated to Parliament), it would be impossible to deny the assertion; whereas, *if there was no marriage*, I conclude your intercourse would be carried on as it ought, in so private a way as to make it wholly inconsistent with decency or propriety for any one in publick to hazard such a suggestion. If, in consequence of your notification, steps should be taken in Parliament, and an Act passed (which,

[1] This is outside the argument. There never was any question of Mrs. Fitzherbert becoming Queen of England. She might have become Queen of Hanover, but never Queen of England without a repeal of the Act of Settlement.

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considering the present state of the power of the King and Ministry, is more than probable) to prevent your marriage, you will be reduced to the most difficult of all dilemmas with respect to the footing upon which your marriage is to stand for the future; and your children will be born to pretensions which must make their situation unhappy, if not dangerous. Their situations appear to me of all others the most to be pitied; and the more so, because the more indications persons born in such circumstances give of spirit, talents, or anything that is good, the more will they be suspected and oppressed, and the more will they regret the being deprived of what they must naturally think themselves entitled to.

"I could mention many other considerations upon this business, if I did not think those I have stated of so much importance, that smaller ones would divert your attention from them rather than add to their weight. That I have written with a freedom which on any other occasion would be unbecoming, I readily confess; and nothing would have induced me to do it, but a deep sense of my duty to a Prince who has honoured me with so much of his confidence, and who would have but an ill return for all his favour and goodness to me, if I were to avoid speaking truth to him, however disagreeable, at so critical a juncture. The sum of my humble advice, nay, of my most earnest entreaty, is this — that your Royal Highness would not think of marrying till you can marry legally. When that time comes, you must judge for yourself; and no doubt you will take into consideration, both what is due to private honour and your publick station. In the meanwhile, a mock marriage (for it can be no other) is neither honourable for any of the parties, nor, with respect to your Royal Highness, even safe. This appears so clear to me, that, if I were Mrs. Fitzherbert's father or brother, I would advise her not by any means to agree to it, *and to prefer any other species of connection with you to one leading to so much misery and mischief.*[1]

"It is high time I should finish this very long and, perhaps your Royal Highness will think, ill-timed letter; but such as it is, it is dictated by pure zeal and attachment to your Royal Highness. With respect to Mrs. Fitzherbert, she is a person

[1] Lord Russell in his "Life of Fox" most disingenuously omits the words in italics from the letter, which he otherwise quotes in full.

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with whom I have scarcely the honour of being acquainted, but I hear from everybody that her character is irreproachable and her manners most amiable. Your Royal Highness knows, too, that I have not in my mind the same objection to intermarriages with Princes and subjects which many have.[1] But under the circumstances a marriage at present appears to me to be the most desperate measure for all parties concerned that their worst enemies could have suggested."[2]

This, it must be admitted, is, as a whole, a temperate and well-reasoned letter, worthy of the writer, and worthy of consideration from the recipient. But the cynical suggestion, "If I were Mrs. Fitzherbert's father or brother I would advise her not by any means to agree to it (the marriage), and to prefer any other species of connection with you to one leading to so much misery and mischief," is the weak link in the chain of argument which weakens all the rest. If we take into account the laxity of the period, it was not an unusual sentiment to come from a free-thinking man of the world, who, at the time he wrote it, was living openly in a "species of connection" with a woman who was not his wife. But it shows that Fox, with all his shrewdness and worldly wisdom, was incapable of understanding a woman of the type of Mrs. Fitzherbert. Neither could he enter into her religious scruples, or realise that what he called a "mock marriage" (it was undoubtedly illegal) would be a valid marriage in her sight, and valid according to the doctrine of the Church to which she belonged. "Mrs. Fitzherbert," says Mr. Langdale, "was a Catholic, and educated in the principles of the Catholic religion, whose doctrine can admit no difference between a prince and a peasant, condemning alike the criminal indulgences of either, and maintaining in both the indissoluble sacredness of the marriage contract."[3] These considerations meant nothing to Fox. Yet it is not

[1] Fox had strongly opposed the Royal Marriage Act.

[2] This letter, together with the Prince's answer thereto, is quoted from the "Memoirs of the Whig Party," by Lord Holland, 1854. Lord Holland says, "The above rough draft of the letter which, though without signature, is all, excepting the date, in Fox's own handwriting, was found among his papers (after his death), together with the answer, written, dated, and signed by the Prince of Wales."

[3] Langdale, *op. cit.*

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necessary to be a man of strict morality to realise that they would be vital to a virtuous woman. Herein, we take it, lies the difference between Fox and the Prince. To Fox every woman was "at heart a rake," but the Prince knew better, and realised that between the woman whom he wished to make his wife and "those others" there was an impassable gulf.

It was perhaps this obliquity of moral vision which accounted for Fox's readiness to swallow the glib denial, or rather evasion, which the Prince sent him the following day. It was much easier, more natural, for him to believe that Mrs. Fitzherbert had yielded at discretion, than that the Prince had agreed to her stipulation of a marriage. In view of what happened later, the Prince's answer to Fox's letter is very important, as it is probably the only direct communication that Fox ever received from the Prince on the subject.

H.R.H. the Prince of Wales to the Right Hon. C. J. Fox, M.P.

"My dear Charles, — Your letter of last night afforded me more satisfaction than I can find words to express; as it is an additional proof to me (which, I assure you, I did not want) of your having that true regard and affection for me which it is not only the wish but the ambition of my life to merit. Make yourself easy, my dear friend. Believe me, the world will soon be convinced that there not only is,[1] but never was, any ground for these reports, which of late have been so malevolently circulated. I have not seen you since the apostacy of Eden.[2] I think it ought to have the same effect upon all our friends that it has upon me, I mean the linking us closer to each other; and I believe you will easily believe these to be my sentiments; for you are perfectly well acquainted with my ways of thinking upon these (*sic*) sort of subjects. When I say my ways of thinking, I think I had better say my old maxim, which I ever intend to adhere to; I mean that of swimming or sinking with my friends. I have not time to add much more, except just to say that I believe I shall meet you at

[1] The Prince meant to say "there not only is *not*."

[2] Mr. Eden, afterwards Lord Auckland, seceded from the Whigs and joined the Tories at this time.

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dinner at Bushey[1] on Tuesday; and to desire you to believe me at all times, my dear Charles, most affectionately yours,

"GEORGE P."

"CARLTON HOUSE,
Sunday morning, 2 o'clock,
December 11, 1785."

It is impossible to acquit the Prince of the intention to deceive Fox by this disingenuous epistle. Not only was his marriage already decided upon, but at the very hour he wrote arrangements for the ceremony were being hurriedly pressed forward. Perhaps the Prince, to whom sophistry and equivocation were second nature, justified himself by the quibble that as the marriage had not yet taken place he could still deny it by implication. For, be it noted, he makes no direct allusion to it, he only denies generally "these reports which of late have been so malevolently circulated." As a great many of the reports then current were false and exaggerated, the Prince was safe in denying them. Yet if Fox had studied the letter carefully then (as he doubtless studied it later) he would have seen that the Prince only evaded the point. He might also have read between the lines how embarrassing the subject was, for the Prince hastily escapes from it to "the apostacy of Eden," of which Fox had said nothing. He might have remembered, too, the Prince's notorious disregard of truth. But people are always ready to believe what they wish to believe, and Fox, having received a document which would not only exonerate him from any knowledge of the marriage, but would also enable him to deny it with authority if occasion arose, washed his hands of the business. The Prince, we may be sure, did not reopen the subject with Fox, nor did he mention this correspondence to Mrs. Fitzherbert, either then or at any future time. Had she seen Fox's letter to the Prince, coming from a man of his private reputation and political position, it might, even at the eleventh hour, have made her pause, for it would have shown her clearly not only the risks the Prince ran, but how she herself would be regarded by a censorious world.

One would have thought that Mrs. Fitzherbert's "male

[1] Lord North, who was a friend of both Fox and the Prince of Wales, was then living at Bushey. But there is no record that the dinner ever took place.

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relatives," to whom Fox alludes, would have advised her against the marriage. But they had been won over to the Prince's side. Her two elder brothers, Watt and Jack Smythe, were hot-headed, impulsive youths, lately thrown upon the town. That they should have been over-persuaded by the Prince is not astonishing, especially as he vowed, by all that was holy, that he held their sister in highest honour. The sons of a Roman Catholic country squire, bred up in the seclusion then consequent on their faith, they were flattered, not unnaturally, by the notice of the most accomplished Prince of his age, and they were dazzled by the prospect held out of future favours arising from the brilliant alliance. They neither realised, nor recked, the dangers of such a connection to their sister. But her uncle, Mr. Errington, should have been wiser. He was a man of the world, of means and of position: he had stood in the place of guardian to his niece since her father had become a hopeless invalid. He must have realised that, in the long run, such a union could not make for Mrs. Fitzherbert's happiness. He, a prominent Roman Catholic layman, must have known that the marriage was illegal, and that the illegality was complicated by the fact of his niece's religion. True, at first he remonstrated with her, but she would not listen; and when he had satisfied himself that there was to be a marriage ceremony fulfilling the requirements of his Church, he let things take their course. After all, his niece was a woman of twenty-nine years of age, who had been twice a widow. The family honour had been satisfied, for the rest she must take care of herself. He even lent himself to helping the marriage forward, for he promised Mrs. Fitzherbert that he and one of her brothers should be present at the ceremony to see that everything was done regularly and in due order.

Thus one difficulty was surmounted. But there remained another, not so easily overcome. A marriage such as Mrs. Fitzherbert insisted upon, a real marriage as opposed to the sham ceremony at Carlton House, involved not only witnesses, but an officiating clergyman. On the surface it would seem that the simplest way to satisfy her scruples would be for the ceremony to be performed secretly by a Roman Catholic priest according to the rites of the Church of Rome, customary in

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what are known as "mixed marriages" — the marriage of a Roman Catholic with a baptized Christian, whether Greek or Anglican, or belonging to one of the Protestant sects. But according to the law of England at that time it was a serious offence for a Roman Catholic priest to celebrate a marriage between one of his faith and a member of the Church of England. Such marriages had to be performed by a clergyman of the Established Church if they were to be regarded as legal, and so the law continued until the second Relief Act of 1791. Until then, even marriages between two Roman Catholics had to be solemnised by a clergyman of the Established Church if they were to be legally binding. Mrs. Fitzherbert may therefore have stipulated for the presence of a clergyman of the Established Church, as an additional guarantee of the regularity (though not of the validity) of the marriage. But it is more probable that the Prince of Wales was averse to a secret marriage by a Roman Catholic priest, because, if it ever became known, such an act might be regarded by zealous Protestants as an act of communion with the Church of Rome on the part of the heir-apparent. It was therefore a *sine quâ non* that the marriage should be performed by a clergyman of the Church of England. The difficulty arose in finding one willing to perform the ceremony.

According to the Royal Marriage Act of 1772 a clergyman solemnising such a marriage would be committing an illegal act, and exposing himself to the penalties of *præmunire*, whatever they might be — in olden days death, then probably confiscation of property and transportation beyond the seas. Some clergymen might be found to argue that an act of parliament tampering with the marriage law was not binding on the Church, since it was carried without consulting Convocation. The Canon Law of the Church of England remained the same whatever Parliament might do, and thus a clergyman need have no scruple about performing the marriage ceremony. But the difficulty was complicated by the fact of the woman being a Roman Catholic and the man the heir apparent to the throne. No conscientious clergyman of the Established Church, even the most liberal-minded, could upon reflection consider that, in the existing state of public feeling, it would be a wise or seemly thing for the Prince of Wales to set at defiance the law by which

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the House of Hanover succeeded to the English throne, and espouse a Roman Catholic.

There were of course unscrupulous and venal clergymen, and to these Colonel Gardner, the Prince's private secretary, to whom was entrusted the task of finding a clergyman, went first. He, true to his instinct, sought one of the type of the notorious Parson Keith and the Chaplain of the Fleet. He first made application to the Rev. Philip Rosenhagen, a disreputable military chaplain, who, being a clever and cunning scoundrel, had made his way into the Prince's society. Rosenhagen was a friend of Sir Philip Francis, and at his death in 1799 he left him his papers, which included certain letters relating to the marriage of the Prince of Wales and Mrs. Fitzherbert. Lady Francis gives the following account of them: —

"Colonel Gardner, the Prince's private secretary, writes the first letter, asking R. to perform the ceremony. R. replies that it would be contrary to the law for him to do so, and, if done, would be productive of important, probably disastrous, consequences to the whole nation. The Colonel answers that the Prince is aware of all that, but pledges himself to keep the matter a profound secret, and that the Prince will feel bound to reward R. for such a proof of his attachment, as soon as the means are in his power. Rosenhagen in reply says that he can trust implicitly the Prince's promise of secrecy, but he dare not betray the duty he owes to the Prince, by assisting in an affair that might bring such serious consequences to him." Lady Francis says there were six letters, and she "believes Rosenhagen declined the business because no *specific* offer was made to him, and not from the motive stated in the letters, as he was daring and unscrupulous." [1]

Application was next made to a clergyman of a very different type, the Rev. Johnes Knight, Rector of Welwyn in Hertfordshire, and who also, after the pluralist fashion of those days, held a city living. "Parson Johnes," as he was called, was a jovial divine of the old school. He was a man of ample private means, a judge of good port, and a keen sportsman. He was more of the squire than the parson, and though he was a scholar, and had the advantages of wealth and good connections, yet he

[1] "Memoirs of Sir Philip Francis, K.C.B., with Correspondence and Journals," 1867.

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MRS. FITZHERBERT

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did not seek preferment in the Church, but preferred his independence, which he might have had to sacrifice on promotion. He had known the Prince of Wales "since he was a child in frocks," [1] and was sincerely attached to him. Parson Johnes had a good many friends in high places. He often posted up to London to look after his city church, see his friends, and dine at his favourite haunts. On one of these occasions he paid a visit to Lord North at Bushey,[2] and it was while he was staying there that he was approached on the subject of marrying Mrs. Fitzherbert to the Prince. The story is best told in his own words. This is fortunately possible by giving the following letter which Mr. Johnes Knight wrote to his daughter Louisa, Lady Shelley, forty-five years later, four months after the death of George IV.:[3] —

The Reverend S. Johnes Knight to Lady Shelley.

"HENLEY HALL, *September* 28, 1830.

"MY DEAREST DAUGHTER, — To please you I will try to recollect my part in the transaction of the marriage of the late King George IV., when Prince of Wales, with Mrs. Fitzherbert.

"In the month of December 1785 I was staying with Lord North at Bushey Park. At that time there were only his own family with him. We were playing at some round game on one of those evenings, when, about nine o'clock, a letter was brought to me from the Prince, in which he commanded me to come directly to a supper at Carlton House. By Lord North's advice I instantly set off for London; and I believe his Lordship thought something more was intended for me than a mere supper, since Lady Glenbervie [4] told me her father desired they would never mention this letter of the Prince.

"On my arrival at Carlton House, a letter was delivered to

[1] *Hic et ubique*, by Sir William Fraser.

[2] Frederick North, second Earl of Guilford, better known as Lord North (1732–1792), sometime Prime Minister.

[3] The Rev. Johnes Knight lived to be nearly a hundred years of age, and his memory was excellent until within a few years of his death. The following letter was lent to me, for the purpose of publication in this book, by a relative of his daughter, the late Lady Shelley. I give the letter, now published for the first time, in full.

[4] Catherine Anna, daughter of Lord North, second Earl of Guilford (1760–1817), married first Baron Glenbervie.

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me from Edward Bouverie to say that the party was put off, and that the Prince expected to see me at an early hour the next morning. It was now eleven o'clock, and I proceeded to the 'Mount' coffee house in Lower Grosvenor Street to get some supper. Here I chanced to meet with Colonel Lake (created Lord Lake),[1] and we supped together. In the course of conversation we talked of the Prince's attachment to Mrs. Fitzherbert, and Lake said that he was almost certain the Prince intended to marry Mrs. Fitzherbert, but that he *trusted* no clergyman would be found to perform the ceremony. To this I cordially agreed, and I went home to Stratford Place, where my mother resided.

"The next morning I was admitted into the Prince's dressing-room at Carlton House, and the Prince very soon came to me in his dressing-gown, appearing to have just got out of bed. He began by apologising for bringing me from Bushey Park, and then, in that persuasive language he knew so well how to employ, he detailed his long love for Mrs. Fitzherbert, the misery he had endured, the taunts he had received from the King in consequence of its having been suspected that the Prince, in the course of the last summer, had gone from Brighton to the French coast to visit Mrs. Fitzherbert. As a proof of his passion he then drew up his shirt, and showed a scar on his side, which the Prince said was caused by his falling on his sword that he might end his life with his hopeless love.[2] The Prince then spoke of his determination to repeal the Royal Marriage Act the instant he came to the Throne (which, by-the-bye, has never yet been done). The Prince in conclusion begged me, if I was really attached to him, to perform the marriage ceremony between him and Mrs. Fitzherbert. I used every argument I could think of to dissuade him from his purpose, but the more I argued against the marriage the more resolved the Prince seemed to become the husband of Mrs. Fitzherbert, and at last the Prince said, 'If you refuse to marry me, I must find out another clergyman who will.' This vehemence of his made me apprehensive that the Prince might get

[1] Gerrard Lake, first Viscount Lake of Delhi (1744–1808), a distinguished soldier, afterwards Commander-in-Chief in India.

[2] The scar which Mrs. Fitzherbert told Lord Stourton she had frequently seen.

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some clergyman to marry him for the chance of Church preferment, and then that this same divine for a larger bribe would betray the Prince's secret to Mr. Pitt, who was then Prime Minister. This made me unable to resist the Prince's importunity, and I could not bear to see him so miserable; for at the period I am writing about, I esteemed the Prince, notwithstanding the difference of our rank, with all the warmth of equality in friendship.

"Dearest Louisa, do not blame me for this weakness; bear in mind I was young, and could not help being flattered by the attentions of a Prince who was one of the best arguers, in his own cause, I have ever known. His were not the regards of a common person; whoever he wished to gain he talked to so frankly, and on subjects most interesting to his hearer, and his tact was so nice that he never failed in the most minute circumstance which he supposed might captivate those with whom he, for the present hour, chose to associate. In a word, his manner, his earnestness, his devoted attachment to Mrs. Fitzherbert, his recklessness of the future, aided by one little but painful circumstance, namely a Prince imploring the consent of a subject, subdued me, and I agreed to marry him.

"This point being settled, the Prince said that on a certain day I should be walking between seven and eight o'clock in the evening at the upper end of Park Lane near Hereford Street,[1] where Mrs. Fitzherbert then lived, and that a person should be ready to introduce me into her house; I understood from the Prince that the only persons who would attend the wedding were *his friends* the Duke of Devonshire, and his Duchess, the sister of Lord Spencer. I then, after thanks in abundance showered on me, left Carlton House.

"I walked home full of the important business, and aware of the serious results I was bringing on myself, yet without the slightest inclination to draw back, when, just at the door, my last night's conversation with Lord Lake at the 'Mount' coffee house, flashed across my memory. I too late recollected that I had tacitly engaged not to marry the Prince to Mrs. Fitzherbert. This made me shrink from the imprudent step I had taken. In my devotedness to the Prince I had set at naught

[1] Now known as Hereford Gardens, at the Oxford Street end of Park Street and Park Lane.

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the legal penalties I must incur, but I could not divest myself of the dread of reproach from Lord Lake, for having broken my word. I had, and ever shall have, the highest opinion of the honour and integrity of Lord Lake. I know he was sincerely attached to the Prince, and I would not have forfeited Lord Lake's good opinion for all the world. I was now completely wretched, and, as a last resource, I immediately wrote the most affecting letter I could to the Prince, saying that before I saw him, I had promised to one person that nothing should induce me to marry the Prince to Mrs. Fitzherbert, that I had resolved to brave every punishment and loss I might sustain from having solemnised such marriage when persuaded to this by the Prince himself; but that I could not endure loss of honour. I mentioned, too, most truly, that during the interesting conversation I was honoured with by him on this subject I lost sight of the promise I had made, but that now, in my cool moments of reflection, it made me most unhappy, and I conjured him, by the strongest terms I could use, to allow me to decline the marriage ceremony.

"The Prince sent me directly a very kind answer releasing me from my engagement, and ordering me to wait on him at Colonel Gardner's house in Queen Street. Colonel Gardner naturally enough said, 'It was a pity I had not recollected my promise before I had allowed the Prince to confide in me.' I replied that I was very sorry for it, but that the agitation of such a question, and the Prince's importunity, had for the moment overcome me. We were now at Colonel Gardner's house; the Prince was already there. He shook hands with me, at the same time saying, 'if he had not let me off, I must inevitably have fled from England.' To this royal logic I joyfully assented, though for the life of me I never could make out how banishment must necessarily follow my resolution to conform to the law. In the course of conversation the Prince said he was sure he knew the friend who had bound me, meaning Lord North, but without mentioning his name. I replied 'that H.R.H. must pardon me, but that I never could tell who that friend was.' We then separated.

"I instantly destroyed the Prince's letters, and never till the death of George IV. mentioned the business to any one. Neither did I tell Lord Lake on his return from India, when

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the tale was out of date, what I had suffered not to lose his friendship.

"I am firmly convinced that the Prince *was* married to Mrs. Fitzherbert, and that all the English Roman Catholics considered her as the legal wife of George IV. I am inclined to think that when the Prince told Mrs. Fitzherbert that I declined marrying him to her, that he forgot to tell her my strict sense of honour alone prevented my performing the ceremony. I can speak nothing but what is as honourable as is true of that ill-used Lady. In her long intercourse with the Prince of Wales, she never spoke ill of any human being. She never was versed in the low art of courtly detraction and calumny, she never enriched herself, her relations or friends, by imposing on confiding Royalty; she never conspired with any low-born engine (*sic*) to keep the distinguished Ruler of England inclosed in a magic circle, remote from the affections of his people. But Mrs. Fitzherbert was truly and honestly attached to her Royal Husband, and always intent on his showing himself frequently among those who were destined to be his subjects. Mrs. Fitzherbert has lived honoured and respected,[1] without guile, without deceit, and without that most odious vice of avarice. Happy had it been for this forsaken Lady, had she never been the object of princely love, and a thousand times happier had it been for the Prince, had he never deserted her for the dearly-bought smiles of her unworthy successor.

"My dear daughter, you have now all I ever remember of this matter, for I write from memory only, having always thought it base to commit to writing the conversations of the day. I have told you what happened forty-five years ago.

"Adieu, dearest; I hope this will give you half as much pleasure in reading, as it has done your most affectionate Father in writing it. Ever yours,

"S. JOHNES KNIGHT."

Both the clergymen who were thus unsuccessfully approached were sworn to secrecy, and neither of them betrayed his pledged word, or gave the slightest hint of what was going on. Yet rumour was extraordinarily busy, and for once was very near the truth. The return of Mrs. Fitzherbert to London soon

[1] It must be remembered that she was still living when this letter was written.

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became generally known, and the gossip of the town put its own construction upon it. In the clubs and coffee-houses, and in the drawing-rooms of great ladies, nothing was talked of but Mrs. Fitzherbert's return, and the terms on which she was supposed to have surrendered to the Prince's importunities were eagerly discussed. Had she insisted upon a marriage or had she not? this was the all-engrossing topic in the world of fashion. Many of her friends declared that she must have done so; others, more worldly-minded, shrugged their shoulders and looked dubious. The discussion was animated and prolonged, and long before it came to an end the marriage had already taken place, with far more solemn and binding forms than rumour generally supposed.

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CHAPTER VI

THE MARRIAGE

(1785)

At last a clergyman of the Church of England was found willing to perform the marriage ceremony. The Rev. Robert Burt, a young curate, who had been recently admitted to priest's orders, consented to run the risk, and to marry the Prince of Wales to Mrs. Fitzherbert in return for £500 paid down and the promise of future preferment.

All obstacles being thus removed, the marriage took place about six o'clock in the evening of December 15, 1785, at Mrs. Fitzherbert's town house in Park Street, Park Lane.[1] The ceremony was duly performed according to the rites of the Church of England by an ordained priest of that Church. Lord Stourton says that "she was married according to the rites of the Catholic Church . . . no Roman Catholic priest officiating,"[2] — a confusion of language which does not mean that the Roman ritual was followed, but that such forms were observed as are recognised by the Church of Rome to constitute a valid marriage; the Anglican rite, performed by an Anglican clergyman, in the presence of witnesses, is deemed sufficient.

Mrs. Fitzherbert's uncle, Henry Errington, gave his niece away, and he and her brother, Jack Smythe, acted as witnesses. The greatest secrecy was observed. The Prince came on foot from Carlton House after dusk, attended only, it is said, by

[1] This house, which was at the upper end of Park Street, close to Oxford Street, near what is now known as Hereford Gardens, has been pulled down. It was standing until within a comparatively recent date. Lady Constance Leslie, a daughter of Mrs. Fitzherbert's adopted daughter, the Hon. Mrs. George Dawson Damer, remembers her father pointing it out to her as "the house where Mrs. Fitzherbert married George IV." It was the house left to Mrs. Fitzherbert by her second husband.

[2] Langdale, *op. cit.*

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Mr. Orlando Bridgeman.[1] Mrs. Fitzherbert, with her uncle and brother and the officiating clergyman, had already assembled in the drawing-room, and when the Prince arrived the doors of the room were locked, the clergyman put on his surplice, and began the service according to "The Form of Solemnisation of Matrimony in the Book of Common Prayer." Mr. Bridgeman does not appear to have been actually present at the marriage; he was probably on guard outside the door of the room, perhaps outside the door of the house, to give alarm in case of need. For it must be remembered this was the first clandestine marriage of a prince of the blood since the passing of the Royal Marriage Act, and if the King or the Government had had any hint of what was going on, the ceremony would have been prevented, if necessary by force. But it passed off without interruption. No one alleged any impediment why these two should "not be coupled together in matrimony." Before a clergyman of the Church of England, and in the presence of witnesses, George Prince of Wales and Maria Fitzherbert knelt side by side and repeated the vows that made them man and wife. The priest joined their hands and pronounced over them the solemn words, "*Those whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder.*"

When the service was concluded, the Prince of Wales wrote out a certificate of marriage with his own hand and signed it. Mrs. Fitzherbert also signed it, and the two witnesses added their names — John Smythe and Henry Errington. This certificate (her marriage lines) was given into the keeping of Mrs. Fitzherbert. Many years later the witnesses' signatures were cut out of the certificate in a moment of panic at their earnest request "by Mrs. Fitzherbert herself, with her own

[1] Orlando Bridgeman (1762–1825) was the eldest son of Sir Henry Bridgeman, Bart., afterwards created first Baron Bradford. Orlando, who was then twenty-three years of age, was M.P. for Wigan. He succeeded his father in 1800, and in 1815 was created first Earl of Bradford. He was a Shropshire man, a friend of the Smythe family, and always a friend of the Prince of Wales. His presence on this occasion is therefore quite likely, though he was not one of the witnesses of the marriage. In addition to Mr. Bridgeman some say that General Keppel, and others the Duke of Bedford, were present at the marriage as friends of the Prince of Wales. But this is unlikely. Not even Colonel Gardner, who had found the clergymen and arranged all the details of the ceremony, was present; the Prince not wishing to compromise any of his servants or friends.

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GEORGE, PRINCE OF WALES, AND MRS. FITZHERBERT

(*After Miniatures by* RICHARD COSWAY, R.A., *now in possession of the* EARL OF PORTARLINGTON. *From a Photograph by* Miss HICKS-BEACH)

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scissors, to save them from the peril of the law." [1] But the document thus mutilated was always kept by Mrs. Fitzherbert, and in 1833 (under circumstances which will be related more fully later) it was placed by her, with other papers necessary to prove her marriage, in Messrs. Coutts's Bank. The certificate [2] runs as follows:—

We, the undersigned, do witness y^t George Augustus Frederick, Prince of Wales, was married unto Maria Fitzherbert, this 15^th^ of December 1785.

Witnesses' names cut out.

GEORGE P.
MARIA FITZHERBERT.

Mrs. Fitzherbert soon regretted her hasty act in cutting out the witnesses' names. She realised that it weakened the value of the document as evidence, and to supply the defect she kept a letter which the Prince wrote to her nearly fourteen years after their marriage. In this letter, dated from Windsor Castle, June 11, 1799, he said, speaking of their marriage: —

"*Thank God my witnesses are living, your uncle and your brother, besides Harris* [Lord Malmesbury], *whom I shall call upon as having been informed by me of every, even the minutest, circumstance of our marriage.*" [3]

[1] Longdale, *op. cit.*

[2] I am allowed to publish the certificate here by gracious permission of His Majesty the King. It is the paper marked "No. 2" on the list given by Langdale (*op. cit.* p. 87), and was until recently kept at Messrs. Coutts's Bank. It has now been removed, with the other Fitzherbert papers, to the private archives at Windsor Castle by command of His Majesty. Mr. Langdale, who had never seen the document, gives the wrong date to the marriage, December 21, 1785. It took place on December 15, 1785. The tail of the "g" of Mr. Errington's signature can be seen.

[3] This extract from the Prince's letter is published here by gracious permission of His Majesty the King. This document is marked "3" on the list given by Langdale (*op. cit.* p. 87): "Letter from the late King relating to the Marriage." Mrs. Fitzherbert told Lord Stourton who her witnesses were, and this letter corroborates her statement. It also goes to show that Orlando Bridgeman was not actually present at the ceremony. The officiating clergyman is not mentioned by the Prince; he had died in 1791.

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It will be seen that everything connected with the ceremony was carried out in due order. The Prince was quite as anxious as Mrs. Fitzherbert that this should be so — that nothing should be wanting which could make her his wife according to God's law.

It is impossible to believe that the young Prince was not absolutely sincere. Despite his youthful follies he was far from being an irreligious man. He knew that to the woman he loved and honoured the marriage was a real one; to her marriage was a sacrament, and the vows she uttered were binding on her conscience and life. There is no reason to believe that the Prince regarded the marriage in a different light, or to doubt that he meant his vows to be equally binding on him. There is abundant evidence to prove that despite the wrong he did her in after years, she was always in his heart of hearts his "only real and true wife."

The Prince could never make her Princess of Wales, she could never share with him his throne, their children (if there were any) could never succeed to the crown of England, but he could and did make her his wife, according to the law of the Church Catholic throughout the world, though not according to the law of the British Parliament. There was no deception in this, for Mrs. Fitzherbert knew the existing state of the civil law as well as he. By this marriage he fulfilled the only stipulation she demanded, for the rest she trusted wholly to his honour. That she trusted to a broken reed is a matter of history, yet we refuse to believe that at the time of his marriage he acted in bad faith, or ever (even in after years) willingly wronged her. What happened later does not necessarily impair his sincerity of purpose at the time of his marriage. He was full of good intentions. If she had made sacrifices, and they were great, let it not be forgotten that he made sacrifices too. For he knew that if this union ever became known, the consequences might be most serious to him. It says much for his trust in the woman he married, as well as his love for her, that he placed in her hands such a tremendous power for harm against him as their marriage certificate. His trust was not misplaced, for she was of a generous and noble nature, incapable of petty meanness or revenge. She solemnly promised that she would never publish the fact of the marriage during his lifetime

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without his consent, and to that promise she adhered in after years through good report and evil, despite the grossest attacks on her character, though she was publicly forsworn in Parliament, and privately repudiated by her husband. She held all the documentary proofs of her marriage; she could have silenced her calumniators with a word; but the proofs were never produced, the word was never spoken. Her conscience was clear to herself, she was void of offence before God, and she let the world say what it would. The result justified her wisdom. Such was the uprightness of her character that silence proved her most effectual weapon, and won for her the belief and respect of honourable men and women.

There remains to be considered the clergyman who performed the marriage ceremony, the Rev. Robert Burt. The Prince of Wales faithfully kept his promise to give him preferment. In addition to the £500 paid down, he appointed him one of his domestic chaplains, and obtained for him the comfortable living of Twickenham (the parish in which Mrs. Fitzherbert's villa was situated). On the strength of these good things Mr. Burt married, and before long had a growing family. His ambitions grew with his needs; for his gratitude was of the kind which has a keen sense of favours to come. Notwithstanding all that the Prince had done for him, we find him, six years after the marriage, writing the following letter, which gives a curious insight into the character of the man: —

"The Reverend Robert Burt to H.R.H. the Prince of Wales.

"TWICKENHAM VICARAGE,
February 25, 1791.

"SIR, — I most humbly beg to notify to Your Royal Highness the death of Dr. Tarrant, Dean of Peterborough, Rector of St. George's Bloomsbury, and Prebendary of Rochester. The above preferments being all in the gift of the Crown, I have thought it my duty to announce them accordingly to Your Royal Highness. The Prebend of Rochester, being the least and most insignificant in value, I take the liberty to mention it *particularly* to Your Royal Highness, and to solicit most humbly and earnestly your influence and interposition

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with the Lord Chancellor to obtain it for me. Your Royal Highness may be assured that I should not have made the present application was I not in a situation to require your gracious aid and protection, and at the same time most sensible how ready the Lord Chancellor is upon all occasions to testify his respect and deference to Your Royal Highness by paying due attention to your recommendations: of this I have already been frequently apprised without having occasion to refer to my own particular case, when Your Royal Highness did me the honour last year to have my name mentioned to the Lord Chancellor. It can never be in my power to testify my gratitude for the indulgences already conferred on me by Your Royal Highness, nor am I able in any degree to express them as my heart would dictate. I can only affirm that I shall ever retain the liveliest sense of my obligations to you, and continually pray for Your Royal Highness's health and happiness as long as I have breath. From Your Royal Highness's most gracious assurance of protection and patronage whenever an opportunity should offer, I have every reason to flatter myself with success from the strength and validity of Your Royal recommendation.

"Let me once more therefore beg leave to solicit Your Royal Highness's interposition on my behalf, and to entreat your assistance.

"In the meanwhile I have the honour to be, Sir, your Royal Highness's most dutiful and faithful servant,

"ROBERT BURT."

The Prince gave this letter to Mrs. Fitzherbert, who appended to it the following memorandum in her own handwriting: —

"*The writer of this letter, the Rev. Mr. Burt, is the clergyman that performed the ceremony of marriage of H.R.H. the Prince, and of Mrs. Fitzherbert.*

(*Signed*)

"MARIA FITZHERBERT."

The clergyman's letter, with the above memorandum written on the back, was kept by Mrs. Fitzherbert among her private papers, and in 1833 she placed it, with other documents, at

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Coutts's Bank.[1] It forms the last link of the chain of evidence which proves beyond all doubt the fact that a ceremony of marriage took place between George, Prince of Wales, and Maria Fitzherbert.

It may be added that Mr. Burt did not obtain the coveted preferment. Perhaps the Prince of Wales felt that he had done enough for him, and that it was time to make a stand. Perhaps he had not the power, for at the time the application was made (1791) the Prince was much out of favour with the King and the Government, and he had no influence even in the smallest matters. In any case the Prince was spared further annoyance from this importunate cleric. Mr. Burt died some eight months after he had written this letter, on October 17, 1791, at the age of thirty-one. He is said to have confessed on his deathbed[2] that he had performed the marriage between the Prince of Wales and Mrs. Fitzherbert. Mr. Burt's name, however, was never mentioned in the connection, and it was believed until recently that Mr. Johnes Knight had been the officiating clergyman. At the time of the marriage it was generally asserted that the ceremony had been performed by a Roman Catholic priest, according to the rites of the Church of Rome.

[1] I am allowed to publish the letter and memorandum here by gracious permission of His Majesty the King. This document is No. 5 on the list given by Langdale (*op. cit.* p. 87): "Memorandum written by Mrs. Fitzherbert, attached to a letter written by the clergyman who performed the marriage ceremony."

This document has served as a pretext for several impostors to declare that they were the children (or descendants of the children) of the illegal marriage of George IV. and Mrs. Fitzherbert. They declared that the proofs of their paternity were to be found in the Fitzherbert papers at Coutts's Bank, more particularly in this document, and for that reason the papers were never published. The publication of the document *in full* now is a convincing proof of the falsehood of their statements, which had not the slightest foundation in fact. Neither by her first or second marriage, nor by her third marriage with George, Prince of Wales, had Mrs. Fitzherbert any children.

[2] "Diary of Lord Colchester," vol. i. p. 68.

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CHAPTER VII[1]

THE VALIDITY OF THE MARRIAGE

REFERENCE has been made to the Royal Marriage Act of 1772, of which Act the Prince of Wales's marriage to Mrs. Fitzherbert was a flagrant violation. It will be well, therefore, to review briefly the provisions of that Act, and the causes which led to its passing into law. We will then pass to other considerations which affected this marriage in its civil and religious aspect.

The Royal Marriage Act owed its origin to the clandestine marriages of George III.'s two brothers, the Duke of Gloucester and the Duke of Cumberland, to English subjects without the consent of the King.

The first of these marriages, though it was not declared until later than the second, was that of the Duke of Gloucester[2] to the Dowager Countess Waldegrave, who by birth was the illegitimate daughter of Sir Edward Walpole (eldest son of the great Minister, and brother of Horace Walpole) by Mary Clement, a milliner's apprentice. Lady Waldegrave was the second of the three beautiful daughters born of this connection, Laura, Maria, and Charlotte. Their paternity was fully acknowledged by their father, who gave them his name, and intended to have married the mother, but was prevented by her early death. His daughters grew up under his immediate care, and he gave them every advantage of wealth and education. They were received everywhere, except at Court, and all three made good marriages. Laura married the Rev. the Hon.

[1] This chapter is an interpolation dealing with the legality and validity of the marriage, and does not affect the narrative. The word "validity" is used in reference to the Canon Law, and "legality" in connection with the Civil Law.

[2] William Henry, first Duke of Gloucester, third son of Frederick, Prince of Wales (1743–1805).

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THE DUCHESS OF GLOUCESTER

(*née* WALPOLE)

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Frederick Keppel, brother of the Earl of Albemarle, who subsequently became Bishop of Exeter; Maria, James, Earl Waldegrave; and Charlotte, Lord Huntingtower, afterwards Earl of Dysart. Lord Waldegrave, who was old enough to be Maria's father, died a few years after the marriage, leaving his widow with three daughters;[1] they had no son. Lady Waldegrave was rich and beautiful, highly accomplished, very dignified, and most correct in her conduct and principles. Many admirers were at her feet, but she rejected them all, and to the astonishment of her friends engaged in a dalliance with the unattractive Duke of Gloucester. The Duke fell in love with the young widow when he was only nineteen, and despite all obstacles and remonstrances persisted in his suit for two or three years.

At last Lady Waldegrave yielded to the importunities of her royal lover, and they were secretly married, without witnesses, in the drawing-room of Lady Waldegrave's town house, by her domestic chaplain, on September 6, 1766. The marriage was not declared; they did not live in the same house, and to outward semblance things went on much as before, though the lady's liveries and establishment became semi-royal. The Duke visited her daily, and attended her everywhere in public, when he treated her with the most profound respect. Some said they were married, for it seemed unlikely that an earl's widow of virtue and pride would become the mistress of a prince of the blood. Others said they were not, and they held it impossible, owing to her illegitimacy, that Lady Waldegrave could ever be acknowledged as the sister-in-law of the reigning Sovereign. So matters went on for six years after the secret marriage, and then, in June 1772, in consequence of the passing of the Royal Marriage Act (brought about by the marriage of the Duke of Cumberland), the Duke of Gloucester formally communicated the fact of his marriage to the King. The King, though he had suspected the truth, was greatly annoyed at its

[1] The Waldegrave sisters were famous for their beauty. The eldest, Elizabeth Laura, married her first cousin, George, Earl Waldegrave. The second, Charlotte Maria, married the Earl of Euston, afterwards Duke of Grafton. The third, Anne Horatia, married Admiral Lord Hugh Seymour, by whom she had a large family. The youngest of her children, Mary Seymour, was afterwards adopted by Mrs. Fitzherbert. Of this we shall have occasion to speak later.

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being confirmed. He deputed the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lord Chancellor, and the Bishop of London to inquire into the legality of the marriage, as it had taken place without witnesses. The Duke said that if there were any doubt cast upon the marriage he would marry the Duchess again, but the committee reported that they were satisfied with its legality. The King therefore acknowledged the marriage, but for a long time he refused to be reconciled to his brother, and spoke of him with sorrow, and of his wife with bitterness. "I never can," he writes, "think of placing her in a situation to answer her extreme pride and vanity."[1] Time, however, the submissive attitude of the Duke, and the irreproachable conduct of the Duchess, worked a change. They lived in exile for years, but when at last they returned to England the King received them at Court, and thereafter showed the greatest kindness to them, and to their two children, Prince William Frederick, and the Princess Sophia of Gloucester.[2]

The second marriage was that of the King's youngest brother, the Duke of Cumberland,[3] to Anne, daughter of Lord Irnham (afterwards Earl of Carhampton), the widow of a Derbyshire squire, Andrew Horton of Catton. This marriage, though it took place subsequently to that of the Duke of Gloucester, was declared first. The Duchess of Cumberland was very different to the Duchess of Gloucester. She was well born, young and beautiful, but lacked the Duchess of Gloucester's pride and high character. She was a born *intrigante* and devoted to a life of pleasure. Her appearance and her friends were what is called "fast," but nothing definite was ever alleged against her virtue. Her marriage to the Duke of Cumberland took place on October 2, 1771, at the lady's house in Hertford Street, Mayfair.[4] The marriage was in regular order, and

[1] Brougham's "Statesmen of the Time of George III.," ed. 1858.

[2] Prince William Frederick succeeded his father as second Duke of Gloucester in 1805. He married in 1816 his cousin, Princess Mary, fourth daughter of George III. There was no issue of this marriage. The Duke died in 1834, the Duchess in 1857. Princess Sophia Matilda of Gloucester never married. She was one of the godmothers, by proxy, of his present Majesty, King Edward VII.

[3] Henry Frederick, Duke of Cumberland (1745–1790), fourth son of Frederick, Prince of Wales.

[4] The proofs of the marriage, obtained by order of the King in 1773, are preserved in the Privy Council Office.

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there was little or no concealment. The newly-wedded pair went to France for their honeymoon, and the Duke wrote from Calais and announced his marriage to the King as though it were a matter of course. George III. was greatly incensed, not only at the marriage, but at the manner in which his brother had thought fit to make it known to him. He sent an intimation to the foreign ambassadors and ministers that he would be obliged if they would abstain from visiting Cumberland House. The Lord Chamberlain sent out a notice to the fashionable world, to the effect that all those who waited on the Duke and Duchess of Cumberland would no longer be received at Court. This rule became practically a dead-letter, for though the King never forgave his brother and never received the Duchess, he could not prevent people from visiting them. The Prince of Wales was one of the greatest offenders in this respect, for he was always at Cumberland House, and society followed his lead. The Duke and Duchess of Cumberland retaliated by setting the King at defiance. They knew, despite all the Sovereign could say or do, their marriage was perfectly legal, and their children (if they had any), came within the line of succession to the throne.[1] The King knew this too, and was determined to prevent such marriages in future. He took counsel with his ministers forthwith, and the result was the Royal Marriage Act of 1772.

The Duke of Cumberland's marriage was thus the immediate cause of the Royal Marriage Act, but there were other reasons as well. George III., who was a despot where his family were concerned, had long contemplated some such measure. Though he was the first of our Hanoverian Kings to be born and bred in England, he had inherited on this point the narrow views of his German mother, who ranked the pettiest prince of Germany above the noblest of England's dukes. It was an article of faith with her that suitable brides for her sons were only to be found in Germany. George III. was a firm believer in this anti-English policy. He was a conscientious man, and not one who would shrink from his convictions; he had himself done violence to his affections in not marrying the beautiful Lady Sarah Lennox, whom he loved. True to his

[1] There was no issue from the marriage.

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theory, he had sent to Germany for his bride, and there had come to him Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz.

Apart from this German bias it must be admitted that there was much to be said on the King's side. His brothers, doubtless, might have found suitable consorts among the daughters of the English nobility, but such alliances as the clandestine marriages of the Dukes of Gloucester and Cumberland did not add to the prestige of the royal house. The King had a numerous family growing up of sons and daughters, and it was clearly desirable that he should have the power to prevent them from contracting imprudent marriages at an early age. Any father of a family should have such power, how much more then the King of England. But George III. aimed at far more than reasonable parental authority. He wished to be invested with despotic power, and to be able to forbid the marriages of his sons and daughters, and of all his relatives (descendants of George II.), not only until a fixed age but for all time. This is clearly shown by the message he sent to Parliament after the Duke of Cumberland's marriage. He stated that the right of approving of all marriages in the royal family had ever belonged to the King as a matter of public weal, and he recommended Parliament to remedy the defect in the laws forthwith.

In consequence of the royal message, on February 17, 1772, a Bill was brought into Parliament to give the King the authority he desired, entitled "An Act for the better regulating of the future Marriages of the Royal Family." The Bill was strongly opposed in all its stages as despotic and un-English. In the House of Lords Lord Rockingham opposed it on the supposition that the Royal family might in time become so numerous as to include many thousand individuals — a not unlikely supposition, for Queen Charlotte had already presented her husband with many children, and seemed likely to present him with as many more. Lord Camden deprecated the power to annul a marriage contracted between persons who had attained their majority, that is, twenty-one years. Lord Radnor spoke against the bill because it did not guard against what he considered to be a greater danger — the improper marriages of Princes on the throne. The King might marry whom he would, but his relatives and children only whom he pleased. Equally vigorous was the opposition in the House of Commons. The Bill was

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debated with locked doors. Fox declared that the measure was "big with mischief, and likely to bring upon the country disorder and confusion; he would give it his most determined opposition in every part and at every stage." The discussion was continued with great acrimony, and was protracted until long after midnight, an unusual thing in those days. At last the Government succeeded in carrying the second reading.

The Bill was again opposed in the Lords on its going into Committee. Lord Folkenstone made an able speech against it. He reviewed historically the claim put forward by the Crown. He alluded delicately to the recent marriage of the Duke of Cumberland (the Duke of Gloucester's marriage had not then been declared), and traced the various instances in which not only Princes but Kings of England had married into families other than royal, not only to their own happiness, but to the benefit of the nation. He cited Queen Elizabeth and Queen Anne as two of England's sovereigns who were children of such marriages as this Bill proposed to condemn. He declared the measure to be "un-English, arbitrary, opposed to natural law, and contrary to the law of God." The great Lord Chatham, who was unable to be present through illness, wrote a letter, which was read in the course of debate, strongly condemning the Bill. He described it as "new-fangled," and the powers given to the King as "wanton and tyrannical." The most strenuous opposition, however, only succeeded in effecting some modifications in the Bill. It was forced through Parliament, and received the Royal Assent in March 1772. In its final form it ran as follows:[1] —

"As His Majesty, from His Paternal Affection to His Family, and His Royal Concern for the future Welfare of His People, and the Honour and Dignity of His Crown, was graciously pleased to recommend to His Parliament to take into their serious consideration, Whether it might not be expedient to supply the Defect of the Laws now in being; and by some new Provision, more effectually to guard the Descendants of George II. (other than the Issue of Princesses who have married, or may hereafter marry, into foreign Families) from marrying

[1] "An Abstract of an Act for the better regulating the Future Marriages of the Royal Family." Georgii III., A.D. 1772.

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without the Approbation of His Majesty, His Heirs, &c. first obtained: be it enacted —

"That no Descendant of the Body of His late Majesty King George II., Male or Female (other than the Issue of Princesses who have married, or may hereafter marry, into foreign Families), shall be capable of contracting Matrimony without the previous Consent of His Majesty, His Heirs, &c., signified under the Great Seal, and declared in Council (which Consent, to preserve the Memory thereof, is hereby directed to be set out in the Licence and Register of Marriage, and to be entered in the Books of the Privy Council); and that every Marriage or Matrimonial Contract of any such Descendant, without such Consent first obtained, shall be void.

"In case such Descendant of George II., being above the age of 25 Years, shall persist in the Resolution to contract a Marriage disapproved of by the King, His Heirs, &c., that then such Descendant, upon giving Notice to the King's Privy Council, which Notice is hereby directed to be entered in the Books thereof, may, at any Time from the Expiration of Twelve Calendar Months after such notice given as aforesaid, contract such Marriage; and such Marriage with the Person before proposed, and rejected, may be duly solemnised, without the previous Consent of His Majesty, or Successors; and shall be good unless both Houses of Parliament shall, before the Expiration of the said Twelve Months, expressly declare their Disapprobation thereof.

"Every person who shall wilfully presume to solemnise, or to assist, or to be present at the Celebration of any Marriage with any such Descendant, or at his or her making any Matrimonial Contract, without such Consent as aforesaid first obtained, except in the case above mentioned, shall, being duly convicted thereof, suffer the Penalties ordained by the Statute of Provision and Premunire made 16 Rich. II." [1]

The powers of the Sovereign, it will be seen, are limited in this Act. The age limit is raised from twenty-one to twenty-five years (no excessive limit), after that the ultimate appeal is to Parliament. If Parliament, being duly notified, does not forbid the marriage in dispute within twelve

[1] "Public General Acts." 12 George III.

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THE DUCHESS OF CUMBERLAND
(*née* LUTTRELL)
(*After the Painting by* RICHARD COSWAY, R.A.)

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months, the King's objection can be over-ruled and the marriage duly solemnised. On the other hand, the scope of the Bill includes not only the Sovereign's children and those in direct succession to the throne, but all members of the Royal Family, even the mose remote, other than the issue of British princesses who have married into foreign families. The powers given are therefore very extensive; the happiness of many is placed in the hands of the Sovereign, and it depends chiefly upon him whether the Act is administered with wisdom and judgment, or whether it degenerates into an instrument of tyranny. The position of the Sovereign in this matter is a delicate and difficult one. Some such Act as the Royal Marriage Act is necessary, and it may be further contended in its favour that, though this one has been in existence for over a century, it has always been administered with discretion;[1] except, perhaps, in one or two instances during the reign of George III. It was this lack of judgment on the part of George III. which probably caused the Act to recoil upon the domestic happiness of some of his children, and ultimately on himself. Into these cases it would serve no good purpose to enter here.

There is a vulgar error that the Royal Marriage Act forbids marriages between princes and princesses of the blood and persons other than royal, but it does nothing of the kind. The consent of the Sovereign is absolutely necessary up to the age of twenty-five, whether the intended marriage be with a royal personage or not. And with the Sovereign's consent the marriage of a prince or princess of the blood royal with a subject, even with a commoner, would be perfectly legal. The words "even with a commoner" need some explanation, for there are many English commoners of royal descent — descended legitimately from our Plantagenet and Tudor kings. In England there has never been (at least until recently) that exaggerated value of titles, *quâ* titles, which obtains in many European countries, where almost every one of any position is possessed of some high-sounding prefix, often signifying little or nothing. In England there are many commoners of ancient lineage

[1] In proof of this contention it may be stated that no appeal to Parliament against the Sovereign's decision has ever been made by any prince or princess of the blood royal since the passing of the Act.

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who can point to a more distinguished descent than many a peer.[1] With the consent of the Sovereign the Royal Marriage Act offers no obstacle to the marriage of such an one to any member of the Royal Family, who, subject to this condition, is free to wed with any English subject, noble, gentle, or simple.

Still the Act was intensely unpopular; it was regarded as un-English, and the opposition to it lasted long after it became law. By many it was thought to be a short-lived measure, one that would be repealed, or fall into desuetude, on the death of George III., and one which even during his lifetime could be evaded with impunity. The Prince of Wales openly said that he would repeal the Act when he came to the throne, and as the whole Whig party were opposed to it, it was thought that even a change of Government would probably result in modifying its provisions. It was said that it was contrary to the common law of England, and would break down at the first test; the penalties of *præmunire* were so vague as to be practically non-existent. It is possible that if the Royal Marriage Act had been the only obstacle, the marriage of Mrs. Fitzherbert to the Prince of Wales would have been acknowledged, and she would have been recognised, not as Princess of Wales (that, of course, was impossible), but as the wife of her husband.

There existed a far more serious difficulty. The fact that she was a Roman Catholic constituted an almost insuperable obstacle to the avowal of the marriage. According to Section IX. of the Act of 1689 — "An Act for declaring the rights and liberties of the subject and settling the succession of the Crown" — the Prince's marriage to a Roman Catholic (if regular) would have endangered his succession to the throne. The clause is sufficiently explicit:

"And whereas it hath been found by experience that it is inconsistent with the safety and welfare of this Protestant Kingdom to be governed by a Popish Prince, or any King or Queen marrying a Papist, the said Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, do further pray that it may be enacted, that all and every person and persons that is, are, or shall be reconciled to, or shall hold communion with, the See or Church of Rome, or shall profess the Popish religion, *or shall marry a*

[1] Mrs. Fitzherbert is a case in point. She was better born and better connected than many a peeress, though the table of precedence gave her no place.

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Papist, shall be excluded and be for ever incapable to inherit, possess, or enjoy the Crown and Government of this realm, and Ireland, and the dominions thereunto belonging, or any part of the same, or to have, use, or exercise any regal power, authority, or jurisdiction within the same; and in all and every such case or cases the people of these realms shall be and are hereby absolved of their allegiance; and the said Crown and Government shall from time to time descend to, and be enjoyed by, such person or persons, being Protestants, as should have inherited and enjoyed the same in case the said person or persons so reconciled, holding communion, or professing, or marrying aforesaid, were naturally dead."

Now Mrs. Fitzherbert was a Roman Catholic born and bred, and one who openly professed the principles of her religion. Therefore at first sight it would seem that the Prince of Wales, in marrying her, had, by violating the clause of the Act which placed his family on the throne, forfeited his right to inherit the Crown as though, in the words of the Act, he were "naturally dead," and the succession would pass to his next brother Frederick, Duke of York. The fact that the marriage was performed by a clergyman of the Established Church according to the rites of the Church of England made no difference, for Mrs. Fitzherbert did not abjure her religion thereby. But, argued the Prince's friends (and doubtless the Prince himself), the Prince did not and could not *legally* marry Mrs. Fitzherbert because of the operation of the Royal Marriage Act of 1772, which declared such marriages to be null and void in law. That these apologists were not sure of their ground is shown by the great care which was taken to keep the marriage secret at the time; and when, later, some part of the truth leaked out, they felt bound to deny not only the marriage, but that any form or ceremony had taken place at all. It is a nice point of law how far the subsequent Royal Marriage Act affected this clause in the Act of Settlement, and it is one on which great constitutional lawyers differ. According to Sir Arthur Pigott the marriage was irregular but valid, and being a marriage between the heir-apparent and a Roman Catholic, operated by the provisions of the Act of Settlement to a total defeasance of the crown.

Lord Brougham also, who had considered the subject well,

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was of the opinion that the plea put forward by the friends of the Prince of Wales, that the marriage was illegal, and therefore the Act of Settlement was not violated, could not be maintained. He says, "It was in discussing this question ever contended, that the marriage being illegal, as having been contracted without the Royal assent, which the Royal Marriage Act requires, there could be no forfeiture, the ceremony being a mere nullity; but all lawyers agree in that acts of various kinds, both by the laws of England and Scotland, are followed by forfeiture of the party's rights who commits the acts as if he were naturally dead, and by the succession of the King's heir, the forfeiture being denounced in order to deter from even the attempt to do the thing forbidden, how ineffectual soever that thing might be in itself for any purpose save the incurring the penalty. Indeed the case of bigamy is precisely of this description; the second wife has no rights whatever, her marriage is a nullity; but she and her pretended husband incur the penalty of felony." [1]

On the other hand, as Brougham himself shows, the Act of Settlement, which fixes the penalty of the Crown's forfeiture on any member of the Royal Family who marries a Roman Catholic, is framed, like most Acts of Parliament, in a careless and clumsy manner. He says: "No means of carrying it into effect are provided, no declaration of the powers by whom the fact is to be ascertained is made, by what authority the subject is to be absolved from his allegiance, and that allegiance transferred from one to another. It is probable that if the circumstance occurred the two Houses of Parliament would from the necessity of the case be required to interpose, as in the two precedents of 1788 and 1811 of the Regency arising from the illness of George III.; but the statute is altogether silent, and the whole enactment assumed the form of a menace or denunciation. Nevertheless its meaning is clear; the intention is to prevent a Roman Catholic marriage, and to forfeit all rank and title whatever of any King or heir to the throne contracting such a marriage." [2]

But it is idle to speculate what would have happened if the fact that the Prince of Wales had gone through the marriage ceremony with a Roman Catholic had been publicly proclaimed,

[1] Lord Brougham's Memoirs. [2] Brougham, *op. cit.*

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for when the question arose later the marriage was formally denied in Parliament on two occasions in the most uncompromising terms. Otherwise Parliament would probably have been forced to intervene, but the necessity of any action being taken would have had to be made very clear, and what the result of such action might have been it is impossible to say. Something would depend upon the attitude of the next heir to the Crown; and if he were hostile, or covetous of power, he could do much to make the position of the elder brother exceedingly uncomfortable. But no such danger was to be apprehended from the Duke of York. He was devoted to the Prince of Wales (and in after years also to Mrs. Fitzherbert), and he always declared that he would never do anything to embarrass his brother, and to this principle he loyally adhered throughout his life. The real danger, if the truth ever became known, lay in the extreme Protestant party in England and Scotland (what in our day would be called the "Nonconformist Conscience") raising an outcry. The days of the Gordon Riots were then but as yesterday. Moreover, Prince Charles Edward was still alive in exile, and excluded from inheriting the throne of his ancestors by the very Act which the Prince of Wales had apparently violated by going through the form of marriage with a Roman Catholic.

So much for the legal point of view. If we consider the matter from the civil aspect alone, it is evident that the marriage was null and void in law, and not only the contracting parties, but the clergyman who performed the ceremony, and the witnesses who were privy to it, committed an illegal act in direct disobedience of the Royal Marriage Act. The Prince of Wales, moreover, in the spirit if not in the letter, violated the Act of Settlement.

But the marriage of any man and woman, however highly placed, or however humble, is not in the eyes of professing Christians a matter of civil contract alone. Both the Prince of Wales and Mrs. Fitzherbert were professing Christians beyond all doubt, the one a member of the Church of England, the other a member of the Church of Rome. The religious aspect of the case therefore forces itself into the controversy, whether we will or no, and the question arises: How far were these two bound by the solemn vows which they made before God?

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With Mrs. Fitzherbert the answer admits of no doubt; with her the marriage was a sacrament, and vows which she took were binding on her so long as she lived. The illegality of the ceremony did not affect its validity with her. The legal point was not one on which she could be expected to feel strongly, for the whole practice of her religion was illegal at that period; the celebration of the Mass was illegal, but the Sacrament was not therefore invalid. But it may be objected that the ceremony was performed by a clergyman of the Church of England, according to the rites of that Church, and the Church of Rome does not recognise the validity of Anglican orders, though she had not at that time condemned them. The answer is that it makes no difference.

To quote Mr. Langdale, a leading Roman Catholic layman, and a cousin of Mrs. Fitzherbert, "the presence of a Catholic priest would not, in any way, have added to the validity of the marriage in the eyes of the Catholic Church; and, therefore, it is fair to conclude, would not have been added to them (the Anglican forms) in those (*i.e.* the case) of Mrs. Fitzherbert, a well-educated Catholic, especially likely to be well informed on the way of conducting the marriage ceremony, so as to fulfil the forms and conditions required by her own Church." [1]

What these conditions are is clearly stated in an article in the *Dublin Review* on the subject of this marriage.[2] The *Dublin Review* has always been regarded as a leading organ of educated Roman Catholics.

"The doctrine of the Catholic Church regarding marriage is plain and simple. She teaches that the marriage contract itself, which is perfected by the words, 'I take thee for my wife'

[1] Langdale, *op. cit.*

[2] The *Dublin Review*, October 1854. Lord Holland's "Memoirs" were published in 1854, and had the effect of raising anew the question of the marriage, and of leading Mr. Langdale to write his "Memoir of Mrs. Fitzherbert."

The article (from which the above quotation is taken) was written by a canonist of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland, shortly after the publication of Lord Holland's "Memoirs of the Whig Party," wherein doubts were cast upon Mrs. Fitzherbert's good faith in the matter of her marriage with the Prince of Wales because she did not insist on the ceremony being performed by a Roman Catholic priest. Mr. Langdale quotes it in his "Memoir," and considers it to be convincing. As, however, it was written some time ago, I submitted it to the Rev. M. Gavin, S.J., who very kindly read it and gave me his opinion. This opinion is incorporated in the footnotes to the quotation.

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on the part of the man, and 'I take thee for my husband' on the part of the woman, or by any other words, or signs, by which the contracting parties manifest their intention of taking each other for man and wife, is a sacrament.

"Protestants are apt to fall into a mistake, that it is the priest who administers the sacrament to the wedded pair. He does no such thing. As far as the validity of the contract and of the sacrament is concerned, even when the contracting parties are both Catholics, the priest need not utter a word. His presence is only necessary as a *witness* to the contract between the parties.[1]

"Up to the time of the Council of Trent the presence of a priest was not necessary for the validity of either the contract or the sacrament,[2] nor was it by any means to confer the sacrament that the Council enacted a law requiring his presence. The law was made in consequence of the abuses which arose from clandestine marriages; because an immoral person who had married without witnesses, could afterwards deny the existence of the contract, and wed another publicly, and in the face of the Church. To prevent these abuses the Council of Trent enacted that the parish priest of one of the contracting parties, or some other priest deputed by him, and two other witnesses, should for the future (*in posterum*) be present (*praesento parocho*) at the marriage contract. The presence of the two other witnesses is required exactly in the same way as that of the parish priest. The law is simply that the marriage should be contracted in the presence of three witnesses, one of whom should necessarily be the parish priest. Nor was this law made at once obligatory even on Catholics. By the ordinance of the Council it is not to have effect in *any parish* until thirty days after it had been published there. This allowed a large discretion to each Bishop with regard to the time of its publication in his diocese, and in fact, it is not long since it has been introduced

[1] "This is not quite correct. The presence of the priest is required for the *lawfulness* of the contract, and his presence is required for the *validity* of the contract in those countries at the present day where the Decree of the Council of Trent has been promulgated. It has not been promulgated in England." (Note by Father Gavin.)

[2] "The writer here seems to consider the contract and the sacrament distinct. But whenever between baptized persons the contract is *valid* there *ipso facto* the sacrament is administered." (Note by Father Gavin.)

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into England.[1] But it does not and never did apply to any marriage in those countries where one of the parties is not a Catholic. Neither in such marriages which are called mixed, nor in those contracted between parties neither of which belong to the Catholic Church, is the presence of any priest required for the validity of either the contract or the sacrament. It is not even necessary that the contracting parties should *know* that marriage is a sacrament. The sacrament exists wherever Christians marry as Christ intended. If they be properly disposed they will receive grace to live happily together, and to bring up their children in the fear and love of God.

"Mrs. Fitzherbert's marriage was therefore perfectly valid both as a contract and as a sacrament in the eyes of the whole Catholic Church,[2] and to imagine that she alone of all those who professed the same faith should look upon it as invalid is monstrously absurd. Neither the Pope nor the whole Church could have annulled it, nor allowed her to marry another." [3]

To Roman Catholics the question was lifted beyond the pale of controversy in 1800. Before that time the Prince of Wales had left Mrs. Fitzherbert and married the Princess Caroline of Brunswick. In turn he had separated from her, and desired to return to Mrs. Fitzherbert; but before she would receive him again she appealed to Rome. The case was laid before the highest authorities of her Church by her director, the Rev. William Nassau, one of the priests of the church in Warwick Street, who made a journey to Rome for that purpose.

[1] "The writer is incorrect in saying the Decree of the Council has been introduced into England. At this moment two Catholics may contract a valid marriage before the registrar without the presence of a priest, but such Catholics sin grievously by so doing.

"In Ireland or France two Catholics cannot contract marriage validly except in the presence of the parish priest or his deputy. A Catholic and a Protestant with a domicile in Ireland may contract marriage validly without the presence of a priest. Could they in France? The answer is disputed." (Note by Father Gavin.)

[2] "This is correct. The writer's inaccuracies do not affect the main issue. Mrs. Fitzherbert's marriage to George IV., being without canonical impediment, was undoubtedly a valid marriage according to Catholic teaching." (Note by Father Gavin.)

[3] This extract from the article in the *Dublin Review* is quoted in Langdale's "Memoir of Mrs. Fitzherbert."

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After exhaustive inquiry into the whole circumstances of the marriage, the decision was given in Mrs. Fitzherbert's favour. According to the law of the Roman Catholic Church, though not according to the law of England, she was declared to be the wife of the Prince of Wales. In the judgment of the Court of Rome she occupied much the same position towards the Prince of Wales as Catherine of Arragon occupied towards Henry VIII., after he had put her away and married Anne Boleyn — a judgment which would be repudiated by the great bulk of the English people, who strongly object to "any foreign jurisdicture," and stoutly maintain that "The Bishop of Rome hath no jurisdiction in this realm of England." [1] This decision was obtained for the personal satisfaction of Mrs. Fitzherbert, and was kept private. But to Roman Catholics it was all sufficient. "*Roma locuta est, causa finita est.*"

There remains the Anglican view of the validity of the marriage, *i.e.*, of the ecclesiastical law of England as against the civil. This is more conflicting; but since the Prince of Wales was a member of the Church of England, it has to be considered. According to the Erastian view, the Church of England is subject to the State, and not only as regards her temporalities, but in questions of doctrine and discipline, faith and morals, she is dominated by the civil power. Parliament therefore has the right not only to arrange the marriage laws (a power, be it noted, which is claimed by the legislative bodies in other civilised states), but to force its decision upon the Church, which is bound to accept whatever regulation of the marriage law Parliament may enact. In the case of the Royal Marriage Act, it was an act brought forward at the instance of the Sovereign, who is the temporal head of the Church, and it passed through Parliament with the consent of the Lords Spiritual, none of whom protested against it. It is contended, therefore, that so long as the Church is united to the State, the Royal Marriage Act is binding on the Church of England.

But it is submitted, on the other hand, by many who are

[1] The Book of Common Prayer, Article XXXVII.: *Of the Civil Magistrates.* Even more strongly was this expressed in the oath of allegiance in the "Bill of Rights." "And I do declare that no foreign prince, person, prelate, state or potentate hath, or ought to have, any jurisdiction, power, superiority, pre-eminence, or authority, ecclesiastical or civil, within this realm. So help me God!"

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amongst the most learned and loyal members of the Church of England, that neither the Sovereign nor Parliament has any right to force upon the Church any law affecting the doctrine and discipline of the Church without her consent. They argue that, according to the Reformation settlement, no change can be made in the Church's formularies without the consent of the Sovereign, the two houses of Convocation representing the Bishops and the clergy, and Parliament representing the laity.[1] The marriage law of the Church of England remained virtually the same before and after the Reformation, and was settled on the general lines which prevail in the Western Church.[2]

After the accession of George I. the Erastian view gained the upper hand, and in 1717 Convocation was prorogued by the Government *sine die*, for protesting against the appointment of a free-thinking Bishop.[3] The clergy had no longer any means of making their voices heard, except through the Bishops in the House of Lords, who were appointed by the State. When the Royal Marriage Act was passed in 1772 Convocation was not consulted, for the simple reason that it did not exist. Therefore, argued certain canonists, the Act was a breach of the Reformation settlement between Church and State, and an unwarrantable intrusion of the temporal power into the sphere of the spiritual. Parliament was of course able to make any laws it pleased, but it could not force those laws upon the Church of England without her consent, and in this instance no opportunity was given to the clergy either to approve or disapprove of this tampering with the marriage laws. The Royal Marriage Act was therefore not binding on the conscience of the

[1] In those days the operation of the Test Acts made it impossible for any but members of the Church of England to have seats in Parliament. Parliament, therefore, may be said to have represented the laity of the Church of England; but in these days, when it is open to Jews, and others not professing Christianity, such a contention is absurd. On the other hand, the power of Convocation to enact fresh canons without the King's licence was expressly taken away by a statute of Henry VIII.

[2] One of the leading laymen in the Church of England, a recognised authority on matters ecclesiastical, writes to me concerning this marriage, "I feel sure that its *validity* cannot be disputed; the Roman view and the Anglican would be identical on such a subject."

[3] Hoadly, who had been appointed Bishop of Bangor — the celebrated Bangorian controversy. Convocation was not permitted to sit again until the middle of the reign of Queen Victoria — in 1852.

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clergy.[1] The canon law remained unaltered, and there was no canonical impediment, therefore the clergyman who performed the marriage between the Prince of Wales and Mrs. Fitzherbert was within his right, and the marriage was valid according to the authorised doctrine of the Church of England. This argument in any case does not affect the legality or illegality of the marriage, but it serves to add to the difficulty of a question already sufficiently complicated.

The conclusion of the whole matter seems to be this. According to the civil law of England the ceremony was illegal and the marriage was null and void. According to the canon law of the Roman Catholic Church, and also of the Church of England, it was valid.

[1] Another conflict between the civil law and ecclesiastical may be found in the re-marriage of divorced persons. No clergyman can be forced to marry them, for the canon law of the Church forbids such marriages, treating them as invalid. Yet they are perfectly legal.

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CHAPTER VIII

PERILOUS HONOURS

(1785–1786)

THERE is a tradition that the Prince of Wales and Mrs. Fitzherbert passed their honeymoon at her villa at Richmond. The legend also says that immediately after the ceremony they set out from Park Street for Richmond, and the road (for it was winter) was so blocked with snow as to be almost impassable. The horses broke down, and they had to sup at an inn at Hammersmith before proceeding to their destination. The honeymoon was but a brief one, for they were back in London by Christmas.

The air was thick with rumour. "The lie of the day," writes Robert Hobart to the Duke of Rutland, on December 24, 1785 (after the marriage), "is that the Prince of Wales is to marry Mrs. Fitzherbert, but I believe, totally without foundation." [1] Again he writes on December 27, "The town still talk of the Prince of Wales's marriage. He has taken a box for Mrs. Fitzherbert at the Opera, and constantly passes the greater part of the night with her. I do not hear of Prince Carnaby's being yet arrived in town.[2] Watt Smith[3] appears already much elated with the honour that is intended, or rather the dishonour which has already attended, his family. His Royal Highness's new establishment is not yet named, but no doubt the Marchioness of Buckingham[4] will be first lady of the bedchamber, and her aunt, Peg Nugent, necessary woman. If pride, arrogance, and self-sufficiency be qualities for a Popish

[1] Rutland Papers, Hist. MSS. Comm. 14th Report, Appendix, Part I.

[2] Sir Carnaby Haggerston, Bart., Mrs. Fitzherbert's brother-in-law, who lived at Grantham, not far from Belvoir.

[3] Mrs. Fitzherbert's eldest brother.

[4] The Marquess of Buckingham was (1782–83) Lord Lieutenant of Ireland; the Marchioness was suspected of leanings to Popery.

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Minister, the noble Marquis himself, by embracing that religion which he appeared to encourage in his wife, may be at the head of the Papistical Court." [1] Sir Gilbert Elliot writes to his wife (December 1785): "She (Lady Palmerston) says the report is that Mrs. Fitzherbert is, or is to be, at Carlton House; that she was married by a Roman Catholic priest, is to have £6000 a year, and is to be created a duchess." [2]

Of course that arch-gossip, Horace Walpole, soon made the marriage the subject of his letters. He writes to Sir Horace Mann, February 13, 1786, "I am obliged to you for your account of the House of Albany (the royal house of Stuart), but that extinguishing Family can make no sensation here, when we have other guess-work to talk of in a higher and more flourishing race; and yet were rumour — aye, and much more than rumour, every voice in England — to be credited, the matter [Mrs. Fitzherbert's marriage], somehow or other, reaches even from London to Rome. I know nothing but the buzz of the day, nor can say more upon it. If I send you a riddle, fame or echo from so many voices will soon reach you, and explain the enigma; though I hope it is essentially void of truth, and that appearances arise from a much more common cause." [3]

It was not long before the gossip of the town reached the ears of the King and Queen. The relations between the Prince and his parents were still strained. The King habitually spoke of him with bitterness; but Queen Charlotte, though she made common cause with the King, and seemed to approve of his harsh treatment of the Prince, was in her peculiar way devoted to her first-born son, for whom she cared more than for all her other children. She was keenly interested in his every movement, and there were plenty of people in high places who were willing to gratify her maternal curiosity. The King and Queen had often discussed the Prince's infatuation for Mrs. Fitzherbert. The Queen had found out all about her character and antecedents. This was not difficult, for she came of a well-known family, and Queen Charlotte had received her at court after

[1] Rutland Papers, *op. cit.*

[2] "Life and Letters of Sir Gilbert Elliot, first Earl of Minto," 1874. Lady Palmerston was mother of the great Lord Palmerston.

[3] "Horace Walpole's Letters," ed. 1859, vol. ix.

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her marriage to Mr. Fitzherbert. Presentation at court in those days was more limited than now, and the Roman Catholics who attended were comparatively few. The King and Queen were also well acquainted with the Weld family, more especially with Mr. Thomas Weld (Mrs. Fitzherbert's brother-in-law), and visited him at Lulworth. The Queen knew her eldest son's character too well to take him seriously, and his extravagance of passion for Mrs. Fitzherbert had at first afforded her cynical amusement, while the King made it a subject for taunting the Prince. They never imagined that the folly would lead to marriage; besides, they knew such a marriage would be illegal, and therefore, from their point of view, impossible. The King deplored his son's infatuation, but the news of Mrs. Fitzherbert's return to England could not have made him very anxious. Both he and the Queen probably thought (if they thought about the matter at all) that the lady had surrendered at discretion. But presently the rumour came that the Prince of Wales had actually gone through a ceremony of marriage with this Roman Catholic lady. They knew not what to think, for the rumour was so persistent, so circumstantial, that it could not be ignored. If true, they regarded it as the crowning act of folly and filial disobedience.

The Court was at Windsor for Christmas; the King had not seen his son for months, and would not see him; but Queen Charlotte is said to have sent for the Prince of Wales as soon as the news reached her ears, and demanded to know the truth. It is very unlikely that the Prince told her the truth. The interview which took place between mother and son (if it took place at all) must have been in private, and the categorical account of the conversation between them given by one writer must be dismissed as imaginary. The Prince, we are told, not only avowed his marriage (which, of course, the Queen would not admit to be a marriage at all), but swore that no power on earth should separate him from his wife. He then addressed the Queen as follows: "I beg further that my wife be received at court, and proportionately as your Majesty receives her, and pays her attention from this time, so shall I render my attentions to your Majesty. The lady I have married is worthy of all homage, and my very confidential friends, with some of my wife's relations, only witnessed our marriage. Have you not

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always taught me to consider myself heir to the first sovereignty in the world? Where, then, will exist any risk of obtaining the ready concurrence from the House in my marriage?" [1] &c. &c. The Prince said a great many foolish things in his life, but it is certain that he never said to his mother anything so foolish as this. He probably equivocated with her, as it was his habit with every one when asked a direct question. It is still more unlikely that the Queen was softened by such reasoning; she would have become harder than ever. The further statement of Dr. Doran (who quotes the conversation), "that it is certain that her Majesty received Mrs. Fitzherbert at a drawing-room in the following year with very marked courtesy," is incorrect. The printed lists of Queen Charlotte's drawing-rooms contain no mention of Mrs. Fitzherbert's name after she went through the ceremony of marriage with the Prince of Wales. On the contrary, the fact that she did not go to Court occasioned comment, both in society and in the press. The following paragraph was given special prominence in the *Morning Post* a year or two later: "A QUESTION. What is the reason that Mrs. Fitzherbert, who is a lady of fortune and fashion, never appears at court? She is visited by *some* ladies of high rank, has been in public with them, and yet never goes to the Drawing-rooms at St. James's. This question is sent for publication by a Person who pays no regard to idle reports, but who wishes to have the mystery cleared up." [2]

But though this conversation may be dismissed as spurious, and the Prince's avowal of his marriage also, there is little doubt that an interview took place between the Queen and the Prince, on the subject of Mrs. Fitzherbert; and enough passed to convince the Queen that this was no common amour. The Queen was greatly annoyed that her son should entangle himself, and in the first flush of her displeasure she could not help regarding Mrs. Fitzherbert with disfavour. But with characteristic common-sense, the Queen, seeing that nothing could be done, resolved to make the best of the situation. She knew that, whatever had passed, her son was free, in law, to marry, and she trusted to time to wear out his infatuation, and to his well-

[1] Doran's "Lives of the Queens of England."

[2] *Morning Post*, Oct. 10, 1788. Needless to say, this impertinent question was never answered.

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known character to make him take advantage of his freedom when that time came.

The fact that Mrs. Fitzherbert no longer went to court made little difference to her social position. The Duchess of Cumberland was not received at court, but she was openly acknowledged everywhere as the Duchess. Neither was the Duchess of Gloucester received at court until many years after her marriage was declared. Mrs. Fitzherbert's non-attendance at court meant no reflection on her personal character, but it meant that, like the Duchess of Cumberland (and, for a time, the Duchess of Gloucester), she was under the ban of the royal displeasure. It was the necessary consequence of the equivocal position in which she had placed herself. The dubious attitude adopted towards her by Queen Charlotte was a sample of what Mrs. Fitzherbert found she had to face from the world in general. She, who had never before suffered the faintest whisper against her fair name, now found herself the subject of much scandalous gossip among her acquaintances, and the butt of the open abuse of the vulgar. It was part of the price she had to pay for following the dictates of her heart; and she paid it, if not without suffering, at least without a murmur. No reproaches escaped her lips, no hint of retaliation, nor any attempt at explanation; she shrank from the publicity which was thrust upon her, but she did not show herself afraid. So far from courting public notice, she altered her manner of life as little as possible. She still kept the name of Fitzherbert, she still used the Fitzherbert liveries, and she drove about in a very quiet equipage. She still maintained her separate establishment; she lived in her own house at Richmond, and the Prince at Carlton House. But when she came to London, residence in Park Street being no longer desirable, she rented for a time Lord Uxbridge's furnished mansion in St. James's Square. This she did at the Prince's request, for he wished her to be nearer to him. He also took for her a box at the Opera, and in this box he was seen with her almost every night.

To do the Prince justice, short of openly acknowledging the marriage, he did everything in his power to secure for Mrs. Fitzherbert respect and consideration. He caused it to be announced among all his friends and intimates that honour paid to Mrs. Fitzherbert was honour paid to him. He made it

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a condition that at all private parties and entertainments which he honoured with his presence she was to be invited also. If she were not asked he would not go. He further insisted that in her case the ordinary rules of precedence were to be waived, and at all entertainments she was always to be seated at the same table as himself; and in public, when the eyes of all were fixed upon him, he always paid her the most courtly deference, which the "first gentleman in Europe" knew well how to assume. His manner towards her was exactly that with which a husband would treat an honoured wife, and manners at that period were much more formal than they are now. "The Prince," said one who knew him in those early days, "never forgot to go through the form of saying to Mrs. Fitzherbert, with the most respectful bow, 'Madam, may I be allowed the honour of seeing you home in my carriage?'" The same writer bears testimony to the "extreme fascination of his manners." [1]

But if the Prince had great influence in the world of fashion, he was not all powerful. Among his friends he reigned supreme, and they included many of the great Whig families. But the Tory houses were by no means prepared to follow his lead blindly in social matters. He could not force people to receive Mrs. Fitzherbert, since he would not acknowledge her to be his wife. Her position at first was one of considerable difficulty and embarrassment. Even her relatives were for a time divided against her. Her brothers, it is true, championed her cause, but their indiscreet advocacy did more harm than good. The Erringtons stood by her, and so did the Haggerstons, but the Welds and Fitzherberts regarded her with doubtful approval, and the Seftons avoided her. Lady Sefton's defection was, perhaps, the most serious blow Mrs. Fitzherbert had to endure from the social point of view, for she had made her *début* in fashionable London under her wing; but in time Lady Sefton came round. At first the great majority of her friends knew not what to think. It seemed a thing impossible that a woman of Mrs. Fitzherbert's character and position should dishonour herself and disgrace her family by becoming the mistress of the Prince of Wales. To those who knew her well

[1] Lady C. Bury's "Diary illustrative of the Times of George IV."

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the thing was unthinkable, and yet, how could she become his wife in the face of recent legislation? If some form, or ceremony, of marriage had taken place, why was it not definitely stated? The Prince could not be questioned directly on such a matter, and his friends met all questions on his behalf with evasions or denials. Mrs. Fitzherbert had no answer but silence. She had done nothing against her conscience, she maintained, and the rest must take its chance. But it was noticed that she still openly practised her religion. She was visited by her spiritual director, and continued to attend Mass at the Warwick Street Chapel. This, her Roman Catholic friends argued, would have been impossible unless her confessor were satisfied that she was not living in sin; and though many of them could not approve of the step she had taken, which they regarded as dangerous and unwise, they were satisfied that she was really married to the Prince according to the requirements of their Church. Having satisfied themselves on this point, they silently supported her by their social influence, which in many cases was considerable. The view generally taken of Mrs. Fitzherbert's conduct by those of her religion is well put by Lady Jerningham, who, writing to her daughter, Lady Bedingfield, March 6, 1786, says: "Mrs. Fitzherbert is generally believed to have been married to the Prince, but it is a very hazardous proceeding, as there are two Acts of Parliament against the validity of such an alliance, concerning her being a subject and her being a Catholick. God knows how it will turn out — it may be to the glory of our Belief, or it may be to the great dismay and destruction of it." [1]

The support given to Mrs. Fitzherbert at this juncture did not come only from the old Roman Catholic families. The Duchess of Devonshire frequently appeared in public with her, and she was a constant and honoured guest at Devonshire House. The Duchess of Devonshire's example was followed by nearly all the great Whig ladies, though here and there one, like the Duchess of Portland, at first held aloof. They called upon her, invited her to their parties, and treated her with every courtesy.

Another good friend of Mrs. Fitzherbert's was Lady Clermont, who held a great position in the society of that day.

[1] "The Jerningham Letters," *op. cit.*

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MRS. FITZHERBERT

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Lady Clermont was a woman of advanced age, who had maintained a stainless reputation throughout her long life. She was a great friend of Marie Antoinette, as well as of Queen Charlotte, and was a welcome guest both at Versailles and St. James's. Lord and Lady Clermont were aristocrats of the old school, courtly and dignified in their manners, and with a high sense of *noblesse oblige*. At their house in Berkeley Square they entertained with stately hospitality. They had the best *chef* and wines in London, and invitations to the Clermonts' dinners and assemblies were eagerly sought. The Prince of Wales often dined with them, and so did Mrs. Fitzherbert. Lady Clermont held her in high esteem, and always supported her. Mrs. Fitzherbert's goodness, her dignity, and her reserve all appealed to this *grande dame* of a generation fast passing away. She was entirely on her side, and bold were they who presumed to question where Lady Clermont approved.

On the Tory side was the Marchioness of Salisbury, who prided herself on taking a line of her own. Lady Salisbury was a great lady of a very different type to the Duchess of Devonshire. It was well said "that while the Duchess of Devonshire never seemed to be conscious of her rank, Lady Salisbury ceased not for an instant to remember hers, or to compel others to remember it also." She was a woman of great ability, a clever conversationalist, but dictatorial and obstinate. She had known Mrs. Fitzherbert before her connection with the Prince of Wales, and as she was convinced that she would do nothing wrong, she continued to welcome her to her house. Lady Salisbury had parties on Sunday evening, and she would not give them up, though appealed to by the Bishop of London. All her habits were conservative, and she retained her sedan chair, and running footmen with blue-and-silver liveries, long after these things had been generally given up.[1]

Mrs. Fitzherbert was tacitly accorded a position *sui generis*, and supported by her friends she soon succeeded in living down the greater part of the opposition against her. That she did so was also due to her tact, her amiability, her unassuming man-

[1] Lady Salisbury was the daughter of the first Marquis of Downshire, and married in 1773 James, first Marquis of Salisbury. Her death was a terrible one; she lost her life in the great fire at Hatfield House in 1835, at the age of eighty-five.

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ners, her kindness of heart, and the straightforwardness of her character. The young Prince at this time loved her with a love that was almost adoration. His "white rose" he called her, partly because of her Jacobite ancestry, partly because of her pale fair loveliness, but chiefly because of her innate purity; and white roses were always her favourite flower. In the world it was noted in Mrs. Fitzherbert's favour that the Prince had greatly improved. The change for the better in his habits and conversation was marked, and could only be ascribed to the influence of a good woman. The young Prince, in spite of his wildness and folly, had ingrained in him a strong love of domesticity, which he had inherited perhaps from his German ancestors. In his youth his home had been unhappy, and his parents unsympathetic; then he was thrown upon the town without any home-life at all. But this beautiful and gracious woman, with her purity of purpose and unobtrusive goodness, made a home for him such as he had never known before. Though the Prince of Wales's public life belonged to the nation, his home life was his own. He had the right to ask that it should be kept sacred, and none should grudge him the quiet hours he spent under the roof of the woman he loved, and who believed herself bound to him by the holiest ties. Here, at least, they might have found sanctuary. Mrs. Fitzherbert usurped no one's place, interfered with no one, and put forward no pretensions. The Prince made no claim on her behalf, either from Parliament or from the nation. All that they asked at this time was to be left alone, to enjoy their happiness in their own way. But the fierce curiosity of the world, which is always meddling in the private affairs of other people, refused to leave them in peace. Were they married or were they not? remained the absorbing question. The denials of the Prince's friends counted for little, for people remembered how emphatically the rumour of the marriage between the Duke of Gloucester and Lady Waldegrave had been denied, and yet it proved to be true after all. The accounts of Mrs. Fitzherbert's marriage were categorical, and the fact that she was supported and visited by many ladies of the first fashion lent the weight of corroborative evidence. With the public the opinion gained ground that a marriage had taken place. The Marquis of Lothian wrote to the Duke of Rutland, March 4, 1786, "You ask me my opinion

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respecting the Prince's marriage. I think it has all the appearance of being true. I believe, when he has been spoken to about it, he has been violent, but I cannot find out that he has denied it peremptorily. He has said to one of the most intimate in his family [household], when asked on the subject, that he *might* answer, if asked the question, in the negative. But surely a report of this sort, were it not true, should be publicly contradicted, and I am amazed that some member of Parliament has not mentioned it in the House. Most people believe it, and I confess I am one of the number. Though I dined alone with him, and you know the general topic of his conversation about women, he never mentioned *her* to me amongst others. I am very sorry for it, for it does him infinite mischief, particularly amongst the trading and lower sort of people, and if true must ruin him in every light." [1]

This was the view taken by many of the Prince's friends, especially by the leaders of the Whig party, such as the Duke of Portland and Fox, and their supporters in Parliament. The Prince had identified himself with the Whigs, a party which derived the greater part of its support from the middle and mercantile classes, most of whom were staunch Protestants and Nonconformists. It needed only the breath of such a rumour to fan the smouldering embers of Protestant prejudice into a No-Popery blaze. It was impossible that the Whig leaders should seem to connive at the secret marriage of the Heir Apparent with a Roman Catholic, and yet the Prince was so intimate with them, both in private and public life, that it was difficult for them to disassociate themselves altogether from his follies. Their political adversaries were not slow to see this, and began to make capital out of it.

To add to the difficulty of the situation, the Prince had been so inconsiderate as to contract his alliance with Mrs. Fitzherbert just at a time when he was engaged in an acrimonious correspondence with the King on the subject of his money difficulties. The King had hitherto refused to pay a penny of the Prince's debts, and this fresh act of filial disobedience was not likely to loosen his purse-strings. The Prince wanted money badly. In addition to the debts arising from his habits of personal extrava-

[1] "Rutland Papers," *op. cit.*

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gance, his building operations at Carlton House, which he had now resumed, were costing him a great deal of money, and his secret and imprudent marriage of necessity increased his embarrassments. Mrs. Fitzherbert, it is true, was free from the reproach of avarice. She gave herself to the Prince without any settlements or money stipulations whatever, and she trusted wholly to his honour. She still enjoyed her jointure from Mr. Fitzherbert, which had hitherto proved sufficient for her needs; and she would have been quite content to make that enough, and not to take a penny from the Prince. But the Prince insisted on her living in a style more commensurate with his dignity. She had to set up an establishment in London, and to entertain him when he wished. Entertaining the Prince was a very expensive matter indeed. Mrs. Fitzherbert lived as quietly and unostentatiously as she could, but these things necessarily increased her expenditure. The Prince was nothing if not generous, and he would have given her half his income at this time if it had been in his power. He had no idea of the value of money, but Mrs. Fitzherbert knew too well his embarrassments, and would not accept from him a penny more than the sum necessary to meet the extra expenses now entailed upon her, which she estimated at £3000 a year. That sum was accordingly given to her by the Prince. This, with her jointure of £2000 a year, she considered to be sufficient. True, the Prince made her valuable presents of jewellery and plate and furniture towards her new establishment. She tried in vain to check his liberality, though the money he spent on her was but a drop in the ocean of his debts.

As the King would do nothing to help, the Prince at last prevailed upon Fox and Sheridan to bring the matter before the notice of Parliament. The time was singularly inopportune, for the report of his marriage to a Roman Catholic had made the Prince very unpopular. Fox was one of those who did not believe that a ceremony had taken place. Had he not the Prince's letter, of December 11, 1785, in which he declared that "there never was any ground for these reports which have of late been so malevolently circulated." Sheridan, on the other hand, was probably one of the few who knew the truth. But he was devoted to the Prince and also to Mrs. Fitzherbert, and was quite free from any excess of scruple. Fox and Sheridan

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raised the question of the Prince of Wales's income early in April 1786, during a debate in the House of Commons on the Civil List. The facts and arguments that Fox brought forward seem unanswerable. "It is my conviction," he said, "that the dignity of the Crown, and even the national advantage, require that the Heir-Apparent should be enabled to live, not merely in ease, but in splendour. Under George I., when the Civil List amounted only to £700,000 a year, the Prince of Wales (afterwards George II.) had an allowance of £100,000 a year. Yet now, when in consequence of the suppressions made in the King's household the Civil List may be fairly estimated at £950,000 a year, only £50,000 are given to the Prince of Wales. If His Majesty, as is evident by the demands of this evening (the Civil List showed a deficit of over £200,000, and the King asked Parliament to make this good), cannot make the former sum cover his expenses, how can it be expected that His Royal Highness is to live upon the last-mentioned income?"

Fox's arguments produced no effect. Members, even on the Whig benches, listened in silence. Only Alderman Newnham, member of parliament for the City of London, supported Fox. Pitt, speaking in the name of the Government, in his most frigid and contemptuous tones, merely said, "he was not instructed to make any communication to the House respecting the branches of the Royal Family: that he should avoid the presumption of expressing any private opinion on the subject."

Pitt's answer was only to be expected, but the chilling silence with which Fox's words were greeted by his supporters in the House brought home to the Whig leaders, and also to the popularity-loving Prince, more forcibly than anything else had done, the damage which the rumour of his secret marriage was doing him with the nation. The Prince, therefore, without doors, became more definite in his denials.

Thomas Orde writes to the Duke of Rutland, May 16, 1786: "The reports about the Prince of Wales are full of contradictions. It is certain that many of the persons said to be present were not there, and the clergyman who is supposed to have performed the marriage ceremony (Parson Johnes) had, as Lord S[outhampton] assures me, no share in it. The Prince denies the thing, but has at the same time dropped hints of *her* belief in the connection, and has wished, therefore, that their

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happiness may not be interrupted by conjectures and rumours. This, however, gives reason to imagine that some ceremony has passed.

"His Royal Highness was present at the marriage of Lady H— W— with Mr. C—, and after the ceremony the Duchess of B. unthinkingly turned to his Royal Highness, and said, 'She supposed this to be the first marriage at which he had been present.' The Prince assured her Grace with great energy that it *really* was the *first*. The Duchess hereupon recollected her *faux pas*, and was confounded.[1] The conduct of her (Mrs. Fitzherbert's) friends is very different. Some of them see her and countenance her, others totally avoid her." [2]

It may be supposed that the topic was not confined to private letters. The press, then far less restrained than now, continued to teem with scarcely veiled innuendoes and scandalous rumours. Some journals maintained that "some sort of marriage" had taken place, others stoutly denied it. Nor did the caricaturists, those inevitable satirists on the follies of the day, linger behind. Prints and cartoons on the subject of the marriage were published in great number and variety; they were exposed in the shop windows, and even sold in the streets, to the great delight of the vulgar. All, or nearly all, of them were wide of the facts, and many were exceedingly scurrilous. It was an age of coarseness, and the licence permitted to the caricaturists was great.

We may dismiss most of these prints to the limbo of their deserved obscurity, but the cartoons of the celebrated caricaturist, Gillray,[3] on the Fitzherbert marriage call for notice,

[1] Wilkes relates this anecdote in a different manner. "The Bishop of B. told me that a most respectable lady of his particular friendship said to him, 'The Prince came in here yesterday, overjoyed, saying, "I never did better in anything. I behaved incomparably well. I could not have thought it, as the case was quite new to me." The lady answered, "Your Royal Highness always behaves well. What was the case that was quite new to you?" The Prince replied, "I was at a marriage, and gave the bride away." The lady said, "Was Your Royal Highness never at a marriage before?" The Prince answered, laying his right hand with eagerness upon his breast, "Never, upon my honour!"'" — Wilkes' "Letters to His Daughter," vol. iii. p. 299.

[2] "Rutland Papers," *op. cit.*

[3] James Gillray (1757–1815). Gillray was then at the zenith of his fame, and his caricatures on Mrs. Fitzherbert's marriage, &c., were mostly issued by Miss Humphrey, 29 St. James's Street, where he lived. As each new cartoon appeared, her shop window was surrounded by a curious crowd.

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if only because of their influence on contemporary thought. They were printed and sold by thousands, and found their way (one or another) into nearly every important house in the kingdom; they formed a never-ending source of conversation and amusement. It is not too much to say that Gillray's caricatures did more than anything else to drag Mrs. Fitzherbert into unwilling publicity. They also gave credence to the persistent rumour that a secret marriage had taken place between her and the Prince of Wales. Notwithstanding the denials, authorised and unauthorised, and despite all appearances to the contrary, this remained a fixed belief in the popular mind so long as they both lived. There is no need to describe these cartoons in detail. One will serve as a specimen of the rest. It is entitled, "*Wife or no Wife, or a Trip to the Continent,*" *designed by Carlo Khan* (Charles Fox). Burke, in cassock and biretta, as a Jesuit priest, is conducting the marriage ceremony at the altar. The Prince of Wales is placing a wedding ring on Mrs. Fitzherbert's finger. Her headdress is composed of three ostrich feathers, and the ring is of unusual size (a reference to the popular rumour that the ring used at the Park Street ceremony was borrowed for the emergency). Fox is giving away the bride, an allusion to the Tory fiction that the Whig leader had planned the marriage in order to secure a greater influence over the Prince. Sheridan and George Hanger (a boon companion of the Prince) are witnesses, and Lord North, dressed as a stage coachman who has acted as driver to the runaway couple (or as John Bull), is fast asleep in a corner.

The political animus of this print was obvious. It was designed to throw the onus of this unpopular marriage on the shoulders of the Whig leaders, who, knowing the accusation to be void of truth, resented it even more strongly than the personages most concerned. The Prince, when he noticed these attacks at all, only referred to them in terms of jocularity, and this also applied to any reference to the connection between himself and Mrs. Fitzherbert in the public press. In this policy of *laissez faire* he was advised by Mrs. Fitzherbert, for she always (except in one absolutely necessary instance) made it a rule to ignore the attacks upon her, either public or private, thus exercising a self-control as wise as it was rare.

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CHAPTER IX

CARLTON HOUSE AND BRIGHTON

(1786)

MRS. FITZHERBERT found the brilliant society of the Prince's circle very different from the quiet Catholic atmosphere in which she had lived the greater part of her life. The staid Roman Catholic families, with their narrow outlook and stately old-world manners, bore no more resemblance to the merry, reckless throng at Carlton House than a nun bears to a woman of pleasure. The creed of the Prince of Wales and his friends was one of pure hedonism — "*Carpe diem, Juan, carpe, carpe,*" was their motto. Carlton House was a court of pleasure pure and simple.

The London season of 1786 was one of unusual gaiety. The depression which had followed on the American War had vanished like a mist, except at St. James's, where the King still unavailingly lamented the loss of "my American colonies," and curtailed in consequence his few and dull entertainments. The Court having practically abdicated its functions, society in London looked to the Prince of Wales to give it a lead, and he responded with a will, for pleasure was to him the breath of his nostrils. Always associated with him now was "the lovely Fitzherbert." Her house in St. James's Square, where she dispensed gracious hospitality, was a favourite meeting-place of his intimates. She accompanied the Prince to every entertainment or assembly he honoured with his presence, and she was received, if not with the formal homage accorded to a Princess of Wales, yet with a delicate deference which was in itself a recognition of her unique position. By little acts of consideration, if not by words, she was tacitly accorded the position of the Prince's wife by all the great ladies who gave her their friendship. Of these a new one had arrived upon the scene in the person of the Duchess of Cumberland, the wife of the King's youngest brother. The Duke and Duchess of Cumberland had

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been living at Avignon for the sake of economy, and they were in France at the time when the Prince of Wales went through the marriage ceremony with Mrs. Fitzherbert. But in the spring of 1786 they returned to London, and threw open to the fashionable world the doors of their beautiful mansion, Cumberland House, in Pall Mall, which adjoined Carlton House. The Duchess of Cumberland received once a week, and her rooms were thronged with distinguished guests. The King's threat that he would receive no one at court who visited Cumberland House had proved an empty one. So general was the response to the Duchess's invitations, that the King could not have enforced it without excluding from his court half of London society, and that half the more brilliant. The Duke of Cumberland, though he was anything but wise, and before his marriage anything but moral, had charming manners; his Duchess had succeeded in reforming him. As to the Duchess, there was nothing to be urged against her except that she had entrapped the Duke into marrying her, and many people said she was much too good for him. In 1786 she was no longer young, but she was still a very handsome, fascinating woman. Even Horace Walpole, who cherished a malevolent hatred of both the Duke and the Duchess, and said all he could to their detriment, was forced to admit her charm. "The new Princess of the Blood," he wrote at the time of her marriage, "is a young widow of twenty-four, extremely pretty, not handsome, very well made, with the most amorous eyes in the world, and eyelashes a yard long; coquette beyond measure, artful as Cleopatra, and completely mistress of all her passions and projects. Indeed eyelashes three-quarters of a yard shorter would have served to conquer such a head as she has turned." [1] And again he thus describes her: "There was something so bewitching in her languishing eyes, which she could animate to enchantment if she pleased, and her coquetry was so active, so varied, and yet so habitual, that it was difficult not to see through it, and yet as difficult to resist it. She danced divinely, and had a great deal of wit, but of the satiric kind; and as she had haughtiness before her rise, no wonder she claimed all the observances due to her rank, after she became Duchess of Cumberland." [2]

[1] Walpole's "Letters," vol. v. ed. 1857.
[2] Walpole's "Memoirs," vol. iv.

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The Duchess did the honours of her house with affability and dignity. Her unmarried sister, Lady Elizabeth Luttrell, aided her on these occasions, but she had not her sister's dignity — her manners were unpolished, and her conversation broad. The Prince of Wales and Mrs. Fitzherbert invariably attended the weekly assemblies at Cumberland House, and the Duchess treated Mrs. Fitzherbert exactly as though she were the Prince's acknowledged wife, and showed her marked friendship. There may have been a spice of malice in this, for the Duchess knew how her recognition of Mrs. Fitzherbert would annoy the King and Queen.

Queen Charlotte detested the Duchess, and declared that she and the Duke pandered to the Prince of Wales's follies in order to keep their hold on him. She spoke of Cumberland House as though it were a hotbed of iniquity. Certainly the play there was high, but everything was conducted with propriety.[1]

At Carlton House Mrs. Fitzherbert was now the presiding divinity, and at all parties to which ladies were invited Mrs. Fitzherbert, by the Prince's wish and desire, played the part of hostess. She was the central star of a brilliant constellation. The Prince's court was far from being the style of Epicurus, which some have depicted it. To quote a contemporary writer: "Carlton House was the centre in which genius, taste, and wit were to be found, and to which elegance, beauty, and refinement in the fair sex most amply resorted. Never, perhaps, had society in England boasted such an union of the most brilliant qualities of the human mind as was assembled at the table of His Royal Highness; never had female charm shown with more dazzling lustre than at the parties where ladies were admitted." [2]

The names of such beautiful and brilliant women as the Duchess of Cumberland, the Duchess of Devonshire, the Duchess of Rutland, Lady Melbourne, Lady Clare, Lady Clermont, Mrs. Crewe, Mrs. Sheridan, and others too numerous to be mentioned here, form a guarantee of the truth of this statement. Nor were the male *habitués* of Carlton House one whit

[1] The French Embassy, then at Hyde Park Corner, was another centre of pleasure. The French Ambassador, Comte d'Adhemar, gave Sunday evening parties, which Mrs. Fitzherbert and the Prince of Wales frequently attended. The Duke of Orleans was much in England at this time.

[2] Adolphus's "History of George III." London, 1841, vol. iii.

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inferior to the women. The Prince had his wild companions doubtless, but among his chosen intimates were many men whose reputation stood high in the State by virtue of their character and commanding abilities. When we remember that the Prince was only twenty-four years of age, it is remarkable that he should have been able to attract to his side, and to hold his own with, men so distinguished in their several ways as Fox, Sheridan, Burke, Grey, Francis, Windham, Erskine, and many more, each of whom by virtue of his talents was deemed an ornament to any society. It is a proof of his abilities which cannot be explained away, even by his most determined detractors.[1] Of Fox we have already spoken, of the others, Sheridan[2] formed an admirable type. He had not been many years in Parliament, and had already attained the height of celebrity as a man of letters and as a politician. His social qualities, his brilliant and ready wit, and his serenity of temper, which nothing ruffled, made him a great favourite with the Prince, to whom he filled the post of confidential adviser. He was a young man, still in the thirties, and his handsome features had not yet been marred by his excesses in wine. Very different was the eloquent Burke,[3] who had a special link with Mrs. Fitzherbert from the fact that he was half a Roman Catholic.

[1] Thackeray, who could see no good in George IV., writes: "At first he made a pretence of having Burke, and Fox, and Sheridan for his friends. But how could such men be serious before such an empty scapegrace as this lad? Fox might talk dice with him, and Sheridan wine; but what else had these men of genius in common with their tawdry young host of Carlton House?"

Again he pours contempt in the well-known passage: "But this George, what was he? I look through all his life and recognise but a bow and a grin. I try and take him to pieces, and find silk stockings, padding, stays, a coat with frogs and a fur collar, a star and a blue ribbon, a pocket-handkerchief prodigiously scented, one of Truefitt's best nutty brown wigs reeking with oil, a set of teeth and a huge black stock, under-waistcoats, more under-waistcoats, and then nothing." ("The Four Georges.")

Against Thackeray's rhodomontade may fairly be set the opinion of Sir Walter Scott. "He (Sir Walter Scott) talked to me of George IV., of whom he was very fond. He spoke of his intellectual faculty, which he considered of a very high order. He said his exalted and good breeding bespoke nothing but kindness and benevolence; but he also observed that when he was roused every inch of him was a King" (Sir William Knighton's "Memoirs," October 3, 1831). And it must be remembered that Sir Walter Scott knew George IV. and Thackeray did not.

[2] Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1751–1816), dramatist and parliamentary orator.

[3] Edmund Burke (1729–1797), orator and politician.

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Tall, with dignified deportment and air of command which impressed the House of Commons, he too could unbend at Carlton House, and pour forth words in his melodious voice that ranged from lofty flights of eloquence to polished sarcasm. He was to the Prince a valuable ally. So in another way was Sir Philip Francis, the reputed author of the "Letters of Junius," whose biting bitterness sometimes fell in with the Prince's mood, and whose pen, dipped in gall, was then devoted to the service of the Prince's political friends.[1] Another of this brilliant group was Charles Grey,[2] who had not long left Cambridge, and had only this year (1786) entered Parliament, where he had lately made a speech which placed him in the first rank of debaters. He was an ardent follower of Fox, yet no two men could be more unlike in disposition. Grey was cold, punctilious, and priggish; but he was high-minded and honourable, with a strong sense of his duty to the nation. Just now, like all the young hope of the Whig Party, he was in high favour at Carlton House, but he and the Prince were too dissimilar in character and temperament to long remain friends. More to the Prince's liking was the polished and wealthy Windham ("Weathercock Windham"), who, like so many of the Prince's friends, dabbled in letters as well as politics; and the clever and crafty Erskine. Lord North was also a visitor to Carlton House, sometime the King's trusted Prime Minister, but now in opposition to Pitt, and hob-nobbing with those whom the King called his "enemies." He was a welcome guest at the Prince's convivial parties, where he was a great favourite with the younger men by reason of his quick wit and easy-going temper. He bore a striking likeness to George III., which caused the Prince of Wales to suggest that "either his royal grandmother or North's mother must have played her husband false."

It must be admitted the Prince's friends were not all as these, and even among them, with "Youth on the prow and Pleasure at the helm," too free indulgence in the wine-cup often led to revels which, though perhaps excusable in youth, sadly compromised the dignity of the men (not all of them young)

[1] Sir Philip Francis (1708–1773), miscellaneous writer and journalist.

[2] Charles Grey, second Earl Grey (1764–1845), afterwards the Prime Minister who carried the Reform Bill of 1832.

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who took part in them. But it must be remembered that drinking was deep and play was high in those days, not at Carlton House only, but in many of the mansions of the great. It must be added in the Prince's favour that, in an age when hard-swearing was general, the language at the Prince's assemblies, though free, was never coarse, and harshly though the King and Queen treated him, he never sanctioned a word in public which would seem to show a want of respect to his parents.

Behind all the brilliancy and extravagance of Carlton House stalked the ever-growing spectre of the Prince's debts. The crisis came, perhaps the Prince had timed it so to come, with the close of the London season of this year (1786). Shortly after the half-year the bills came pouring in, and other claims fell due. The Jews would advance no more. The moneylenders and tradesmen waxed so importunate that it became obvious, even to the Prince, that something must be done, unless bailiffs were actually to enter his house. The subject was one of long and anxious discussion between the Prince and his friends. Mrs. Fitzherbert, Sheridan, and Fox were called into council. Mrs. Fitzherbert urged immediate and drastic retrenchment, and Fox agreed with her view. But Sheridan advised that one more appeal should first be made to the Government. Pitt was approached with a demand for £250,000, that sum representing roughly the Prince's debts. The Prime Minister, not wishing to take upon himself the onus of an absolute refusal, temporised and equivocated, and generally behaved in so unsatisfactory a manner that, as Pitt wished, the Prince lost patience, and made a direct appeal to his father. The King affected to consider the matter, and with the knowledge and confidence of Pitt asked, as before, for another detailed statement of liabilities — not, as the event proved, because he had any intention of paying the Prince's debts, but because he wanted to know on whom and how his son spent his money. Again the Prince fell into the trap. A schedule was duly furnished, and on it was found an item amounting to £54,000, for jewellery, plate, furniture, &c., which, it was said, the Prince had ordered for Mrs. Fitzherbert, to set her up in her new establishment in London. It was not an unreasonable amount, all things considered; but it served to anger the King, and furnished a pretext for him to

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refuse to help his son. The King wrote the Prince a short letter, in terms "not very civil," declaring that neither now, nor at any future time, would he sanction an increase in his son's allowance.

The King's refusal was not altogether unexpected; but the curt, harsh terms in which his letter was written enraged the Prince. He showed the letter to his friends as a fresh proof that his father "hated" him, and that it was useless for him to humiliate himself before the King. Always in extremes, the Prince now resolved upon a decided step. He claimed to take it on his own initiative, and certainly he did not consult either Fox or Sheridan in the six hours which passed between his receiving the King's letter and his replying to it. This reply took the form of an ultimatum, in which he informed the King, that since he would not help him, he would immediately shut up Carlton House, live as a private gentleman, and set aside £40,000 a year for the payment of his debts, so that all the world might know the issue between them. This threat made the King uncomfortable, for he had sent frequent requests to Parliament to pay his own debts, despite the enormous Civil List which he enjoyed, and he had no wish to be represented in an unpopular light. He temporised, and sent the Prince a message through Lord Southhampton, saying that he had not *absolutely* refused, and if his son took so rash a step he must abide by the consequences. But the Prince's blood was up; he refused to be played with any longer, and he replied in a letter intended for publication, wherein, after recapitulating his view of the King's refusal, he said that he could not delay longer, not only because of "the pressing importunities of many indigent and deserving creditors," but because "further procrastination might have exposed me to legal insults." He would therefore reduce every expense in his household, even those necessary to his birth and rank, "till I have totally liberated myself from the present embarrassments that oppress me." [1] Brave words these, and well worthy of a high-spirited young prince.

To this letter the King vouchsafed no answer. Perhaps he did not believe that his pleasure-loving and self-indulgent son

[1] Letter of the Prince of Wales to George III., July 9, 1786.

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would act upon his words. If so, he was mistaken. Mrs Fitzherbert's influence strengthened the Prince in his high resolve. He lost not a day in carrying his words into effect. The half-finished work at Carlton House was stopped, and the workmen discharged on the moment; the scaffolding remained a witness to all London of the straits to which the heir-apparent was reduced. The state apartments at Carlton House were closed, the Prince retaining only a few private rooms for his own use. Half the servants were discharged, and those who were retained suffered a reduction in their wages, which it is only fair to say they suffered cheerfully — perhaps they thought that the evil day would not last long. The Prince also shut up his stables, and sold his horses and carriages, liveries and harness, by public auction. The Prince gained little by the sale, a poor £7000; and the proceeding intensely annoyed the King and Queen. But the epithets, "undignified," "revengeful," "theatrical," and so forth, which the Court party freely applied to the Prince's retrenchments, were hardly justified. Pique had, no doubt, something to do with this sudden passion for economy, but there was also a real and honourable desire on the part of the Prince to pay his just debts, and free himself from galling embarrassments. It was hoped by the Prince's friends that this spectacle of a young and generous Prince, nobly striving to overcome his difficulties, would touch the heart of the nation. Fox took this view; and though the Prince in writing to the King had acted without consulting him, he thoroughly approved of the course the Prince was now following. Indeed, Fox seems to have gone further, and to have approved, if not suggested, that the Prince should retire for a time to the Continent, where it would be easier for him to carry out his plan of retrenchment.[1]

If the Prince had gone to the Continent (probably to Hanover) a practical object-lesson would have been presented to the nation of the King's impossibility to live in harmony with his sons, or to realise the advantage of having them in England. At that time three of the King's sons, unable, or unwilling, to stay under the paternal roof, had been sent out of the country. The Duke of York was in Hanover, Prince William was at sea,

[1] *Vide* Letter of the Prince of Wales to Mr. Fox, July 19, 1786. — Grey's "Life."

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and Prince Edward at Geneva. Arrangements were also being made for the expatriation of the younger Princes, as soon as they were old enough, to the obscure German university of Göttingen, which was considered by the King a superior place to Oxford or Cambridge for the training of English princes. Nor were the King's relations with his brothers any more fortunate. The Duke of Gloucester and his blameless Duchess were living at Florence, under the ban of the royal autocrat's displeasure. The Duke and Duchess of Cumberland had only a few months before returned from exile, and were in public disgrace at Court. Of all the King's sons "only the eldest," says Sir Nathanial Wraxall, "remained at home in a dismantled palace, all the state apartments of which were shut up, his establishment dismissed, and himself reduced in externals to the condition of a private gentleman." [1]

The Princes could not all have been in the wrong and the King alone right. George III. was a well-meaning and conscientious man, but in his dealings with his brothers and sons he showed himself not only unwise but harsh and despotic. In the case of the Prince of Wales his harshness came perilously near to hatred. The Queen was also to blame, for she helped to stir up the family discord, and, imbued with the spirit of the little German Court whence she came, she aided and abetted the King in his petty domestic tyrannies. It is no wonder that their high-spirited sons, born and bred in England, did not submit kindly to so irksome a yoke. An instance of the King's unwisdom in dealing with his sons was shown in the open ridicule which he poured upon the Prince of Wales's plan of economy. He made merry with his courtiers over the unfinished work at Carlton House, he exhibited to them a model which the Prince had sent him of what the palace would ultimately be like, and he asked derisively when it would be finished. The jest was not very well-timed, nor in the best of taste, for whatever were the Prince's extravagances he had borne for three years the principal burden of representing royalty in the metropolis. Though the Prince in his money troubles did not carry public sympathy with him, neither did the King in his refusal to help him. It was well known that in the King's Court economy

[1] Wraxall's "Posthumous Memoirs."

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was practised to the verge of meanness, yet the King never had enough money, and was frequently coming to Parliament for more. The nation wondered what became of the money, and many said it went to the Queen's needy German relatives, but the truth was that the greater part of it was used by the King for the purpose of keeping his political friends in office. No King spent less on himself than George III., or led a simpler or more moral life, but public opinion was not with him on this point; it was thought that, if the Prince had to be helped, his father was the one to help him. This view found expression in a caricature of the day, which depicted the King and Queen coming out of the treasury loaded with money-bags, and the Prince following in the rags of the prodigal son.

But the cleverest of the satirical prints which refer to the breaking-up of the Prince's establishment at Carlton House parodies the well-known scene in Sheridan's *School for Scandal*. The Prince, as Charles Surface, holds a mock auction, and knocks down the family portraits. Lot 1 is the picture of "Farmer George and his Wife," which is described as going for "not more than one crown." Lot 2 is Mrs. Fitzherbert. Through the open door is seen Tattersall's and the sale of the Prince's stud. This sale lent credence to the rumour that the Prince was going to Hanover for a time.

But the Prince did not go to Hanover. He went to Brighton.

Brighton, or "Brighthelmstone" as it was then called, had not long emerged from the obscurity of a fishing village; it bore little resemblance to the "London by the sea" we know to-day. Kemptown had not been built, King's Road had not been planned, and Hove was nothing but a hamlet. Brighton was at the beginning of its prosperous career, yet it was nearer its social zenith then than now, for the Heir Apparent to the throne, "the first gentleman in Europe," the incomparable arbiter of fashion, honoured it with frequent visits, and made it his favourite residence. The Prince first went to Brighton in 1783, on a visit to the Duke and Duchess of Cumberland, who were residing there for the summer; and some have it (though there is no proof) that he first met Mrs. Fitzherbert there. He came again in 1784, having been recommended sea-bathing for a malady to which he was always subject, a swelling of the glands of the throat, which, by the way, led to the wearing of the

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preposterously high collars and stocks which he made fashionable. This time he was followed by many of the great world. We read of Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox being there, the Duke of Chartres, and the Duke of Queensberry. The Prince stayed in a house a little way back from the sea, surrounded by trees and a garden, and with a fine view. It belonged to Lord Egremont's brother. The Brighton air suited the Prince so well, and he liked the house so much, that he bought the property. He gave orders that most of the old house should be pulled down, and a new one erected. The work was begun at once. The Prince came down to Brighton in the summer of 1785 to superintend the operations, and it was during this visit that he was said to have gone across to the French coast to see Mrs. Fitzherbert. By the next summer (1786) the Pavilion was almost finished — that is to say, so far as any house in which the Prince lived could ever be finished, for building was with him a mania.

At this period the Marine Pavilion, as it was first called (later, the Royal Palace), had not taken on its present Chinese, pseudo-oriental aspect. The most remarkable feature of the building, as it was then altered for the Prince, consisted of a circular edifice in the centre crowned by a dome or cupola: this was connected by Ionic colonnades to the two wings. The north wing was new, but the other wing was merely adapted from the original villa. There were balconies and verandahs so as to admit air and exclude heat, and a view of the sea could be obtained from almost every window. Before the Pavilion, looking towards the sea, was a lawn, with shrubs and flowers, separated only from the public grounds by a low wall and trellis-work, for in those days the Prince of Wales had no objection to see and be seen. The Pavilion, in short, was merely a pleasant villa, not a royal residence. It was a retreat for a prince, but not for his court, planned something after the manner of the pavilion of "Sans Souci" in the gardens of Potsdam, where Frederick the Great loved to pass quiet days. It was some years later, when the Prince tried to convert this pleasant retreat into a royal palace, that it assumed the grotesque aspect it wears to-day.

The Prince left his semi-dismantled palace in Pall Mall on July 11, and, true to his new plan of retrenchment, he travelled

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THE PAVILION, BRIGHTON, IN 1778

(*From an old Print*)

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down to Brighton in a hired postchaise — a fact which was duly noticed by the newspapers and caricaturists. One cartoon represents the Prince and Mrs. Fitzherbert leaving London in a hired coach. The lady is studying "The Principles of Economy." The coach is piled high with furniture, vegetables, meat, small beer, and raisin wine. Weltje, the Prince's major-domo, is driving. The cartoon was not correct, for Mrs. Fitzherbert did not accompany the Prince to Brighton, but followed him a fortnight later. She, also on economy bent, had given up her house in St. James's Square, and the delay in her going to Brighton arose from the need of finding a house for her there, as she refused, until her marriage with the Prince was openly acknowledged, to live under the same roof with him. A pretty, modest villa was found for her close to the Pavilion, a little house with green shutters, and separated only from the mansion by a strip of garden.[1]

Mrs. Fitzherbert arrived on July 24. A local authority says that she then "came to Brighton for the first time recorded."[2] But it is almost certain that she had visited Brighton before; she appears to have been well known there in 1782, in the days before she was famous, and there is a tradition that the Prince followed her to Brighton during his ardent courtship in the summer of 1784. His great liking for the place dated from that time, and it is said that Mrs. Fitzherbert inspired it. That is tradition only, but it is a fact that Mrs. Fitzherbert was devoted to Brighton; that she, more than any one else, confirmed the fickle Prince in his attachment to the place; and that his presence and her influence promoted the prosperity of the town. Thus to Mrs. Fitzherbert, equally with the Prince of Wales, Brighton was indebted for more than half-a-century of popularity in the world of fashion almost unparalleled in the history of an English seaside place.

The Brighton of Mrs. Fitzherbert's day was not ungrateful to her. She was always welcomed there with respect, and to the end of her long life that respect never wavered. It was something quite apart from her connection with the Prince,

[1] This villa was situated quite near to what is now the North Gate. It must not be confounded with the house which Mrs. Fitzherbert built to the south of the Pavilion, on the Steine.

[2] "The Brighton Pavilion and its Royal Associations." By J. G. Bishop.

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though the Prince himself was most popular with the honest folk of Brighton; they shouted themselves hoarse whenever he came; and whatever he did they, at least, were not disposed to be hard upon his follies.

The Prince and Mrs. Fitzherbert passed the summer of 1786 very quietly at Brighton. The Prince entertained little, and kept up no state. The wilder spirits among his friends were absent. Only Sheridan and a few others were there.

The Prince superintended the improvements in the Pavilion (as they were so near completion they were not stopped like those at Carlton House). He walked with Mrs. Fitzherbert daily on the broad open space between the Pavilion gardens and the sea, known as the Steine. This became the fashionable parade, where during the next half-century might be met at various times nearly all the most celebrated men and women in England — all the princes, politicians, beauties, and beaux that made up the brilliant society of the later Georgian era. The Prince mixed freely with the throng on the Steine, chatting with those whom he knew, and bowing and smiling to the promenaders with affability and good-nature.

The Prince was now quite a reformed character; under the influence of Mrs. Fitzherbert he drank less, gambled not at all, moderated his language, and seemed in every way determined to lead a new life. "People talked much of the Prince of Wales's reform, particularly in this spot which he has chosen as the place of his retreat," wrote the Earl of Mornington to the Duke of Rutland, July 18, 1786.[1] "Mrs. Fitzherbert is here," he added, "and they say with child." This rumour, which was generally credited at that time, had no foundation in fact.

The marked improvement in the Prince's mode of life was well known at Windsor, but it made no difference to the hostility of the King and Queen. In August 1786, Mary Nicholson, a madwoman, made an attempt to stab the King, when he was alighting from his carriage. The moment the Prince heard the news he posted off to Windsor to offer his congratulations to his father on his escape, but the King refused to see him, though he was in the next room to that in which the Queen

[1] Rutland Papers, *op. cit.*

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received her son. Mrs. Fitzherbert's great desire was to bring about a reconciliation between the Prince and his father. It was her theory that, if the Prince would only persist for a period in his plan of retrenchment and reform, the King's heart would surely soften towards him. The Prince, who knew the King better than she did, declared that his father would never help him. But he was so much under Mrs. Fitzherbert's good influence at this time, and so happy in her society, that he did whatever she wished.

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CHAPTER X

DENIAL OF THE MARRIAGE

(1787)

THE Prince of Wales was very little in London during the winter of 1786–1787. He was too poor to be at Carlton House, and he lived for the most part in houses lent to him, like that of the Duke of Gloucester's at Bagshot, and Lord North's at Bushey. He was very hard pressed for money. The Duke of Orleans, always his evil counsellor, urged him to accept a substantial loan. The Duke of Portland heard of it in Paris, and wrote in great alarm to Sheridan, who consulted Mrs. Fitzherbert. They both exerted themselves to prevent the Prince from receiving aid from a foreign prince, and successfully. They urged that he only had to wait a little longer, for public opinion was slowly declaring itself on his side.

The Prince had now persisted in his plan of economy for six months. His small debts were all settled, and a dividend of nine per cent. on the larger ones had been paid. The strained relations between the King and his son had become a public scandal, and reflected on the credit of the dynasty. The Prince's friends, and indeed many men on both sides of politics, thought it was time that this state of affairs ended. But the obstinacy of the King, and the reluctance of responsible politicians to intrude into what was primarily a family quarrel, seemed to render any private settlement impossible.

Early in 1787 a meeting of the Prince's political friends and supporters was held at Mr. Pelham's, to discuss the situation. The Prince was present. Some were for bringing the Prince's debts before Parliament, but the majority were opposed to it. The discussion was superficial, for in the minds of all was the question whether the Prince was married to Mrs. Fitzherbert or not. The real obstacle in the way of a Parliamentary settlement lay in the dread of a public discussion of his alleged marriage. Every one present knew this, but the subject was

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not so much as hinted at. It is no wonder, therefore, that the conference broke up without coming to any decision. The Duke of Portland and all of the Whig leaders, except Fox and Sheridan, were opposed to pledging the party to support the Prince. They knew how profoundly the Protestant feeling in the country had been stirred by the rumour of his secret marriage to a Roman Catholic, and they feared that they would seem to condone his action by advocating his case in Parliament. They could not understand the attitude of Fox, who was generally astute in reading the signs of the times. He was the Prince's chosen friend and mentor, and bound to him by special ties. Yet instead of joining with the great Whig Lords in deprecating any discussion of the subject, he stood apart and kept his own counsel. He had resolved upon independent action, and consulted neither the Prince nor his political friends. He carried in his pocket, unknown to any save himself, the Prince's evasive letter of denial, written on the eve of his marriage to Mrs. Fitzherbert. That letter was sufficient for Fox's purpose, and there is no evidence to show that after he received it he spoke to the Prince again on the subject. The Prince, we may be sure, did not mention the matter to him, for he never voluntarily alluded to unpleasant topics. Yet the papers were full of the marriage, and just at this awkward moment that eccentric politician, Horne Tooke, added fuel to the flame of public curiosity by publishing his celebrated pamphlet on "The Reported Marriage of the Prince of Wales," in which, after treating the Royal Marriage Act with not unusual contempt, he wound up by declaring, "It is not from the debates in either house of Parliament that the public will receive any solid or useful information on a point of so much importance to the nation, to the Sovereign on the throne, to his royal successor, and to a most amiable and justly valued Female Character whom I conclude to be in all respects both *legally*, really, worthily, *and happily for this country*, her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales." [1]

Though the Prince maintained silence on the all-important

[1] "A Letter to a Friend on the Reported Marriage of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales." By J. Horne Tooke. London, 1787.

John Horne Tooke (1736–1812), politician and pamphleteer, an ex-clergyman, was returned for Old Sarum 1801, but was prevented from taking his seat in the House by an Act passed for declaring clergymen ineligible.

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subject of his marriage, he must have know what was in the minds of all his friends. He knew also why the Whig leaders refused to champion his cause, but he affected ignorance, and quarrelled with the Duke of Portland because he would not support his application to Parliament. But still the Prince persisted in his resolution of bringing the question of his debts before Parliament, in some form or other, and since the Whigs as a party would not take up the matter, it was resolved to entrust it to an independent member. Such a one was found in Alderman Newnham, member of Parliament for the city of London, a man of high repute in financial circles, though not of great weight in the House. The Tories said that social ambition was the reason of Newnham's championing this unpopular cause, but there appears no reason to doubt his sincerity.

On April 20, 1787, *Alderman Newnham* rose in the House of Commons to ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (*Mr. Pitt*) —

"Whether it was the design of the Ministers to bring forward any proposition to rescue the Prince of Wales from his present very embarrassed condition? for though he thought that His Royal Highness's conduct, during his difficulties, had reflected greater honour and glory on his character than the most splendid diadem in Europe had upon the wearer of it, yet it must be very disagreeable to His Royal Highness to be deprived of those comforts and enjoyments which so properly belonged to his high rank." [1]

Mr. Pitt answered: "That as it was not his duty to bring forward a subject of such a nature as that suggested by the hon. gentleman except at the command of his Majesty, it was not necessary for him to say more in reply to the question than that he had not been honoured with such a command."

Alderman Newnham then gave notice that he should bring forward a motion on May 4.

This announcement caused considerable perturbation in the minds of the King and his Ministers, who were anxious to prevent a discussion which could reflect no credit on any one concerned in it. They could not understand the Prince's move,

[1] "Parliamentary History," vol. xxvi. (1786–1788), from which the following quotations and account of the debates are mainly taken.

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for they had always felt confident that he would not force matters to a crisis, lest the subject of his marriage should be brought forward. But since he was not amenable to reason, it was resolved to see what veiled threats would do. Instead, therefore, of waiting for events to follow their usual course and leaving the matter to be discussed on May 4, four days after Alderman Newnham's notice (on April 24), Pitt suddenly sprang the subject on a crowded House.

Mr. Pitt said: "That perceiving the House was so full, he would take the opportunity of alluding to a subject of the highest importance in itself and of the greatest novelty, which of all others required the greatest delicacy which could possibly be used in its discussion. He wished to know the scope and tendency of the motion coming on next week, and whether the honourable magistrate intended to persevere with it."

But *Alderman Newnham* was not to be drawn. After a hurried consultation with his friends he answered: —

"That he did not mean, as the right honourable gentleman had phrased it, to force forward the subject of the Prince of Wales's stiuation. It in fact forced *itself* forward, but he should have been extremely well pleased to have had the matter taken out of his hands by his Majesty's Ministers. As to the particular parliamentary form which it would wear, it really had not been decided upon by himself, but the object of it he had no objection to state, as it was to rescue his Royal Highness from his present embarrassed situation."

In this he was supported by Fox, who thought he saw a sign of weakness in Pitt's thus bringing forward the subject.

Mr. Fox said: "That he entirely agreed with the right honourable gentleman that it was a subject of peculiar novelty, but so were the circumstances that gave rise to it, and it was also of equal delicacy, but as that delicacy would arise from the necessity of going into an investigation of the causes from which these circumstances originated, for that must prove a painful work to the House, . . . he hoped that the business might be forestalled, and something done in the interim to render it unnecessary for the honourable magistrate to prosecute his intention."

Mr. Pitt answered: "He admitted that the principal delicacy of the question would lie in *the necessity for inquiring into the*

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causes of the circumstances which were proposed to be brought into discussion, and for that reason he would, from his profound respect for every part of the illustrious family who were concerned in it, wish if possible to avoid discussion. If the honourable magistrate should determine to bring it forward he would, however distressing it might be to him, as an individual, discharge his duty to the public, and enter *fully* into the subject."

Pitt spoke with meaning, and there was a veiled threat in his words which caused a considerable sensation in the House. Every one understood what Pitt meant when he spoke of the "necessity of inquiring into the causes." But the Prince's friends deemed it best to ignore the menace at the time, and the subject dropped.

Three days later, on April 27, *Alderman Newnham* again brought forward the subject. After reminding the House of what had passed, and regretting that the Ministers had done nothing in the meanwhile to meet the Prince's wishes, he moved: —

"That an humble address be presented to his Majesty, praying him to take into his Royal consideration the present embarrassed state of affairs of his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, and to grant him such relief as his royal wisdom should think fit, and that the House would make good the same."

Before Pitt could rise to reply to this challenge an interruption came from an unexpected quarter, where from below the gangway on the Ministerial side of the House sat, in solid phalanx, the Tory squires. Their mouthpiece was Rolle,[1] one of the members of Parliament for the county of Devon. Rolle was a typical country squire, uncouth in person, rough in manners, halting in speech, impervious either to bribery or flattery, and noted for his sturdy independence. He was the hero of that satirical effusion the "Rolliad," and an avowed enemy of Fox. No sooner had Alderman Newnham sat down than *Mr. Rolle* rose, and, speaking with dogged emphasis and a broad Devonshire accent, said: —

[1] John Rolle (1750–1842), M.P. for Devonshire, had entered Parliament in 1780 as a supporter of Pitt. In 1796 he was created Lord Rolle. He was the aged peer who stumbled on the steps of Queen Victoria's throne when he offered homage at her Coronation. He was twice married; his second wife survived him for many years, and died so lately as 1885.

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"If ever there was a question which called particularly upon the attention of that class of persons, the country gentlemen, it would be the question which the honourable Alderman had declared his determination to agitate, *because it was a question which went immediately to affect our Constitution in Church and State.* Whenever it should be brought forward he would rise the moment the honourable Alderman sat down and move the previous question, being convinced that it ought not to be discussed."

Rolle's words made a profound impression on the House, especially on the Ministerial benches. Rolle represented the most influential section of the Tory party, the country squires, those staunch upholders of the Established Church, who were noted for their strong dislike of Nonconformists, both Roman Catholics and Protestant Dissenters.

Fox was unaccountably absent from this discussion. He said afterwards that he did not know the matter was to be brought forward on that day, but surely he must have known it, as he was in close touch with Alderman Newnham. But Sheridan was present, and he represented in an especial manner the Prince of Wales. He threw himself into the breach, and strove in vain to remove the impression made by Rolle's words, by affecting not to understand their meaning.

Mr. Sheridan said: "He differed much from those who represented that alarming consequences might ensue from the present motion, and that the existence of Church and State was endangered by its agitation: he did not well know what precise meaning to affix to expressions of this kind, but he was well convinced that the motion originated only in a consciousness of the unparelleled difficulties under which the heir to the Crown was so long suffered to labour. . . . Whatever was brought forward he knew would meet with an unequivocal and complete reply, such as he was assured his Royal Highness would himself give, as a peer of Great Britain, were a question of this nature to be agitated in another House. How far such a discussion might be proper he left to the feeling of the gentleman to whom he alluded to decide."

But the sturdy Rolle would have no ambiguity. *Mr. Rolle* rose again to declare that: "If a motion were urged, which he thought highly improper to be proposed, the honourable gen-

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tleman would find he would not flinch from it, but act as became an independent country gentleman to act upon such an occasion, and state without reserve his sentiments, according as the matter struck him. He would do his duty."

Pitt now thought fit to intervene. From his seat on the Ministerial bench he had seen the impression which Rolle's words had produced, and the confusion they had wrought among the Prince's friends, and he availed himself of the opportunity. He hoped to frighten the Alderman into withdrawing his motion. Therefore, speaking with great deliberation, and emphasizing his meaning with significant gestures —

Mr. Pitt said: "He was very much concerned that, by the perseverance of the hon. member (Newnham), he should be driven, though with infinite reluctance, *to the disclosure of circumstances which he should otherwise think it his duty to conceal.*" (Sensation.) "Whenever the motion should be agitated he was ready to avow his determined and fixed resolution to give it his absolute negative."

There could be no doubt about Pitt's meaning, and when he sat down several members of Parliament rose one after another, deprecated the motion, and urged Alderman Newnham to withdraw it. But the Alderman made no sign, and presently Sheridan rose again. So far from yielding, he was quick to seize the advantage of Pitt's indiscreet speech. A license, which might be allowed in a private member of Parliament like Rolle, could hardly be permitted in a Minister of the Crown. Speaking with great warmth —

Mr. Sheridan said: "He was unable to comprehend why the notice of this motion should have produced any alarm amongst the country members, who must be aware that the Prince should not be suffered to continue in such embarrassed circumstances. . . . Some honourable gentlemen had thought proper to express their anxious wishes that the business should be deferred, but the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Pitt) had erected an insuperable barrier to such a step. It would then seem to the country, to all Europe, that the Prince had yielded to terror what he had denied to argument. What could the world think of such conduct, but that he fled from inquiry and dared not face his accusers? But if such was the design of these threats, he believed they would find that the author

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of them had as much mistaken the feelings as the conduct of the Prince."

Sheridan's speech was nothing but a piece of bluff. He knew that Pitt either would not, or could not, prove his words, and he wished to force him to withdraw them. Pitt had only uttered his threat in the hope of forcing a withdrawal of the motion. When he saw that the Prince's friends were determined to brave the matter out, he was for the moment nonplussed, and knew not what to reply. The Speaker came to his aid by calling up a member of Parliament to present a petition which he had in his hand, and the House proceeded with the business of the day.

But the matter could hardly be allowed to rest thus. The excitement in the lobbies was great. Members gathered in little groups discussing Pitt's words, and wondering what answer he would make to Sheridan's defiance. Meanwhile, Pitt had a hasty consultation with his colleagues. It was recognised that his threat had failed to produce the desired effect, and that he had unwittingly given advantage to his opponents. Later in the evening, therefore, the Prime Minister reopened the question, this time with a speech that was painfully like an equivocation.

Mr. Pitt said: "He wished to remove the possibility of misinterpretation, especially as the hon. gentleman (Mr. Sheridan) had stated that the insinuations which had been thrown out made it impossible for the friends of the Prince of Wales to withdraw their motion. The particulars to which he alluded, and which he should think it necessary to state more fully to the House, related *only to the pecuniary embarrassments* of the Prince of Wales, and to a correspondence that had taken place on the subject, and this had no reference to any *extraneous circumstances*."

But Sheridan had no intention of letting him off so easily. He rubbed in Pitt's disavowal.

Mr. Sheridan said: "He was extremely glad the right hon. gentleman had explained himself, because, undoubtedly, as he left the matter, the interpretation of the right hon. gentleman's declaration had been the very construction which he had now so fully cleared himself from having had any intention to convey. As to *that* matter, any sort of allusion to it would have been in the extremest degree indelicate and disrespectful."

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Sheridan went that same night to Carlton House and told the Prince what had passed. The Prince was greatly perturbed, and his perturbation only slightly lessened when the next morning Pitt sent for Lord Southampton, repeated to him his recantation in the House the previous day, and asked him, in effect, to explain to the Prince that he had not meant what he said. The Prince adroitly seized the advantage, and returned to Pitt a haughty answer, "that he never received verbal messages except from the King." But though Pitt might be muzzled, there remained Rolle to be reckoned with, and he was determined to bring the matter of the Prince's reputed marriage to a Roman Catholic before the notice of the House at the first opportunity. Behind Rolle were the country gentlemen, and behind them again was the Protestant feeling of the country. The Prince could not hope to stand up against the storm. Deserted as he was by many of his political friends, with the King against him, and the Government avowedly hostile, he thought that to avow his marriage at this juncture to a Roman Catholic would be to imperil his succession to the Crown. The Prince was not prepared to make such a sacrifice. Yet after the pointed allusions made to the secret marriage in the House, it was not possible to fight the question any longer with gloves. It would have to be met with either avowal or disavowal. The Prince, as usual, sought refuge in sophistry. The marriage was not legal. Therefore it was no marriage; for him it did not exist, since it left him free. Mrs. Fitzherbert, he knew, would never betray him, whatever happened; the clergyman and the witnesses could be trusted to keep their own counsel, for over them hung the mysterious threat of *premunire* and its penalties. The marriage could be safely denied; therefore, he argued, he was free to deny it.

Yet when the Prince thought of his wife, whom he loved more than any other being in the world, some remorse seems to have crossed his mind. Sheridan, who enjoyed the friendship of them both, was sent to sound Mrs. Fitzherbert on the subject, and to prepare her for the worst. She did not know of the letter the Prince had written to Fox before the marriage, nor probably did Sheridan. Neither had Sheridan the courage to tell her definitely that the marriage would be denied, but he said that it was probable that some explanation would be re-

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quired by Parliament of her connection with the Prince; and he impressed upon her the extreme difficulty of the Prince's position in the matter, and the necessity of secrecy. It was easy to work upon her fears, for the perils of the Prince's situation, and the dread of Protestant prejudice, were ever present with her. The unhappy lady seems to have realised her danger, for she told Sheridan that "they knew she was like a dog with a log tied round its neck, and they must protect her." [1] Sheridan, of course, was ready to promise anything and everything to calm her, but he left her with a presentiment of evil to come. Her fears were not unfounded. This time the Prince had fully made up his mind that the marriage must be treated as non-existent, and if the question were raised in Parliament, his friends must be prepared to meet it with denial.

Fox, for one, was determined that the denial should not lack completeness. More than any one else, his popularity had suffered. Without a shadow of truth he had been accused of conniving at the Prince's secret marriage with a Roman Catholic. Everything which unscrupulous opponents could do to convey this impression to the people had been done; paragraphs in the press had accused him of being privy to the marriage, and caricatures and cartoons innumerable had depicted him as assisting at a ceremony of which he knew nothing, and against which he had protested in vain. These accusations had been going on for nearly a year, and he determined to answer them once for all. He had the Prince's letter, and that was enough for his purpose. Whether the marriage had taken place or not was beside the point. It had been denied to him by the Prince in writing, and he did not seek to go behind that denial. Moreover, he did not feel in any way called upon to shield Mrs. Fitzherbert from the consequences of her folly. Fox was always loyal to his friends, perhaps too loyal; but Mrs. Fitzherbert was not his friend. They had nothing in common — he did not understand her or sympathise with her, and she, though she was discretion itself, had an instinctive dislike for him. His blasphemies shocked her, his loose morals revolted her, and his excessive drinking and gambling disgusted her. She feared that in these matters he had a bad influence over the Prince.

[1] Langdale, *op. cit.*

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Perhaps, too, Fox was a little jealous of her. Since the Prince's connection with Mrs. Fitzherbert, the frank comradeship between him and his "dear Charles" had gone, and though the Prince declared himself as devoted as ever to his friend, the old intimacy had ceased. Fox would have been less than human if he had not attributed some of this falling off to Mrs. Fitzherbert. In a crisis like the present, therefore, he conceived that his duty was only to the Prince; he owed no consideration to Mrs. Fitzherbert. With these thoughts in his mind he resolved to act. To say this is not to place Fox altogether in the wrong, for he had authority for what he stated. But it shows that in what followed the Prince was not wholly to blame.

It was announced that Alderman Newnham was to bring forward his motion on April 30. On that day the House of Commons was crowded, and everywhere within its precincts there reigned an air of subdued excitement. Fox was in his place, fortified doubtless for the coming fray by an extra bottle of port, and the Prince's friends, such as Sheridan, Grey, and others, were gathered around him. When the Alderman rose to propose his motion, his opening words showed that the Prince's friends meant to present a bold front.

Alderman Newnham said: "On Friday last, much personal application had been made to him from various quarters of the House to press him to forego his purpose, and much had been said of the dangerous consequences which might result from the discussion of such a subject. One gentleman had gone so far as to contend that it would draw on questions affecting Church and State. That expression, coupled with certain hints which fell from the Chancellor of the Exchequer (*Mr. Pitt*), had induced him, as well as other members, to suspect that in order to deter him from persisting in bringing forward this motion, matters of singular delicacy were to be agitated without reserve. The Chancellor of the Exchequer had indeed explained his meaning in a way satisfactory to the House, and in his opinion, the gentleman who had made use of the expressions relative to Church and State was bound as a man of honour to come to an open explanation of what he meant by the allusion."

Mr. Fox rose immediately after Mr. Newnham had concluded his remarks. He began with an apology for his absence on the previous occasion: "Not having heard that a subject of

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CHARLES JAMES FOX

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so much delicacy and importance was likely to be at all alluded to on Friday last, he had not come down to the House on that day. On a former occasion he had heard the Chancellor of the Exchequer throw out certain hints which appeared to his mind extremely like a menace, and that of a very extraordinary nature, but those hints had, he understood, on Friday last been much narrowed by explanation, and confined to certain correspondence and letters which had passed on the subject without doors. . . . He desired it to be understood, not as speaking lightly but as speaking from the immediate authority of the Prince of Wales, when he assured the House that there was no part of his Royal Highness's conduct that he was either afraid or unwilling to have investigated in the most minute manner. With regard to the private correspondence alluded to, he wished to have it laid before the House, because it would prove that the conduct of his Royal Highness had been in the highest degree amiable, and would present an uniform and a perfect picture of duty and obedience, so much so as ever, in any instance, had been shown from a son to his father, or from a subject to his Sovereign. With regard to the debt, which was the cause of his embarrassments, his Royal Highness, if the House would deem it necessary, was willing to give an account in writing of every part of it — not of every single sum, or even of every thousand pounds, for such an account the good sense of the House would see to be improper, if not impossible — but a general and fair account. He had not the smallest objection to afford the House every possible satisfaction, and there was not a circumstance of his Royal Highness's life which he was ashamed to have known."

So far Fox had only spoken in generalities. Now, for a moment, he paused, and then raising his voice, but speaking slowly and with a deliberation which compelled the attention of the House, he continued: —

"With respect to the allusion to something full of 'danger to the Church and State' made by the hon. gentleman, one of the members for the county of Devon, till that gentleman thought proper to explain himself, it was impossible to say with any certainty to what that allusion referred; but he supposed it must be meant in reference to that miserable calumny, that low malicious falsehood, which had been propagated without doors,

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and made the wanton sport of the vulgar. In that House, where it was known how frequent and common the falsehoods of the time were, he hoped a tale only fit to impose upon the lowest order of persons in the streets would not have gained the smallest portion of credit; but when it appeared that an invention so monstrous, a report of a fact which had not the smallest degree of foundation, a report of a fact *actually impossible* to have happened, had been circulated with so much industry as to have made an impression on the minds of members of that House, it proved at once the uncommon pains taken by the enemies of his Royal Highness to propagate the grossest and most malignant falsehoods with a view to depreciate his character and injure him in the opinion of his country. When he (*Mr. Fox*) considered that his Royal Highness was the first subject in the kingdom and the immediate heir to the throne, he was at a loss to imagine what species of party it was which could have fabricated so *base and scandalous a calumny*. Had there existed in the kingdom such a faction as an anti-Brunswick faction, to that faction he should have certainly imputed the invention of *so malicious a falsehood*, for he knew not what other description of men could feel an interest in first forming, and then circulating with more than ordinary assiduity, a tale in every particular so *unfounded, and for which there was not the shadow of anything like reality*.

"This being the fact, and as the occasion had made it necessary for him to declare as much, he hoped it would have this good effect upon the House and upon the country, that it would teach both the one and the other to distrust the reports circulated to the prejudice of the Prince, and lessen any opinion that they might in consequence take up injurious to the character of his Royal Highness, who might be said to be a person in whose fair fame that House and the country were deeply interested. The whole of the debt the Prince was ready to submit to the investigation of the House; and he was equally ready to submit the other circumstance to which he had alluded to their consideration, provided the consideration of a House of Parliament could, with consistency, with propriety and decency, be applied to such a subject. Nay, his Royal Highness had authorised him to declare that, as a peer of Parliament, he was ready in the other House to submit to any, the most

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pointed questions, which could be put to him respecting it, or to afford his Majesty or his Majesty's Ministers the fullest assurances of *the utter falsehood of the fact in question*, which never had, and common sense must see, never *could* have happened."

Half the House had listened to Fox's remarks with incredulity, the other with a sense of relief. When he sat down a buzz of eager comment broke forth, which was hushed as Pitt rose. The great Minister was more than usually cold, frigid, and contemptuous; his calmness contrasting markedly with the impassioned demeanour of Fox.

Mr. Pitt said: "He should not at present enter into a debate upon the question." He rebuked Mr. Fox for his "hints and insinuations against a person unnamed (the King). As the right hon. gentleman did not choose to point his own charge against any individual, he should not point it for him." Of Rolle he said that he, "with the zeal that became a good subject, interposed, in common with many other respectable members, with his entreaties to the hon. magistrate, not to force the House to the discussion of a subject which was of all others to be most avoided, and which he looked upon himself as bound in duty to the public, to the Prince, and to the Sovereign, to prevent if possible."

It will be seen that Pitt made no allusion to Fox's denial of Mrs. Fitzherbert's marriage to the Prince, and his silence on this point was significant. The House would willingly have let the matter drop, but Rolle was determined to probe the subject to the bottom. He was not in the least convinced by Fox's words, and he suspected sophistry and equivocation.

Mr. Rolle said: "After the pointed manner in which he had been alluded to it was necessary to say a few words. . . . The right hon. gentleman had touched upon the very matter to which he had alluded, when he, on Friday last, called on the country gentlemen to attend to a question which would affect both Church and State. That matter had been stated and discussed in newspapers all over the kingdom, and it had made an impression upon him, and upon almost all ranks of men in the country who loved and venerated the Constitution. The right hon. gentleman had said it was impossible to have happened. They all knew that there were certain laws and Acts

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of Parliament which forbade it; but though it could not be done under the formal sanction of the law, there were ways in which it might have taken place, and those laws in the minds of some persons might have been satisfactorily evaded, and yet the fact might be equally productive of the most alarming consequences. It ought therefore to be cleared up."

Rolle had not calculated the full extent of Fox's audacity.

Mr. Fox immediately rose and replied: "That he did not deny the calumny in question merely with regard to *the effect* of certain existing laws, but he denied it *in toto*, in point of fact as well as law. The fact not only never could have happened legally, but *never did happen in any way whatsoever*, and had from the beginning been a base and malicious falsehood."

Mr. Rolle then asked: "whether in what had fallen from the right hon. gentleman he had spoken from direct authority."

Mr. Fox declared that "he had spoken from *direct authority*."

Against a denial so sweeping there could be no appeal. At least, so it seemed to another independent member, *Sir Edward Astley*, who said: "It gave him great pleasure to hear from such high authority direct contradiction of a report which had been so freely circulated in newspapers, and made the subject of an infinite number of prints, that it had effected a very great and general impression on the public."

But Rolle sat silent and unbelieving. The matter might have dropped there had not Sheridan, who perhaps feared that Rolle would raise the subject again, tried to wring from him an admission that he was satisfied.

Mr. Sheridan said that: "It would be extremely unhandsome in the hon. gentleman (Mr. Rolle), who had called upon his right hon. friend (Mr. Fox), to say whether he spoke from direct authority or not, to sit silent after having received so explicit an answer."

Rolle's answer showed how little he believed Fox.

Mr. Rolle replied: "That nothing the hon. gentleman (Sheridan) could say would induce him to act otherwise than to his judgment should appear to be proper. The right hon. gentleman had certainly *answered* him, and the House would judge for themselves of the propriety of the answer."

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Mr. Sheridan observed that: "The hon. gentleman, after having put a pointed question and received an immediate answer, was bound in honour and fairness either to declare that he was satisfied, or to take some means of putting the matter into such a state of inquiry as would satisfy him. To remain silent, or to declare that the House would judge for themselves after what had passed, was neither manly nor candid. If, therefore, the hon. gentleman did not choose to say that he was satisfied, the House ought to come to a resolution that it was seditious and disloyal to propagate reports injurious to the character of the Prince of Wales, and thus by authority discountenance the reports."

Mr. Rolle maintained his attitude. He said that "he had not invented these reports, but merely said that he had heard them, and that they had made an impression on his mind."

Mr. Pitt then felt forced to intervene on behalf of his supporter. He observed that "he had never heard so direct an attack upon the freedom of debate and liberty of speech in that House ever since he had sat in Parliament. . . .The hon. gentleman (Mr. Sheridan), who took so warm a part in the business on the other side of the House, should rather be obliged to the hon. member (Mr. Rolle) who was the first to suggest a question which had been the means of bringing forward so explicit a declaration on so interesting a subject, and one which must give complete satisfaction not only to the hon. gentleman himself but to the whole House."

Still Sheridan persevered. Perhaps he wanted to know exactly how much Rolle knew on the subject.

Mr. Sheridan "denied that he wished to infringe on the liberty of debate, and he would appeal to the House whether under such circumstances it was honourable and manly, fair or candid, for the hon. gentleman (Mr. Rolle) to remain silent, and whether he ought not either to declare that he was satisfied, or to resort to means of ascertaining the facts; for it was adding in a tenfold degree to the malicious falsehood which had been propagated against his Royal Highness, to say that the Prince had authorised a false denial of the fact. The right hon. gentleman (Mr. Pitt) had himself been obliged to assume that 'the hon. member must be satisfied since he had never acknowledged that he was so.'" All, however, Sheridan could wring

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from Rolle was a curt answer that "the hon. gentleman had not heard him say that he was *not* satisfied."

Mr. Grey then broke in to the debate. He supported Mr. Sheridan, and denounced the conduct of Rolle to be "both unmanly and ungenerous. If that hon. gentleman had not received complete satisfaction, the House, he believed, had." Grey next attacked Pitt for his conduct of this business, and for "the veiled hints and menaces he had thrown out last week."

Mr. Pitt in the most positive manner again "disclaimed any idea or intention of threat or menace — he deprecated discussion of questions of so delicate a nature, and asked every gentleman, to whom the harmony and happiness of the kingdom was dear, to join with him in so deprecating."

At this point the subject dropped, and the House adjourned.[1]

Thus was Mrs. Fitzherbert forsworn, and the wrong done to her then was never set right in her lifetime.

[1] "Parliamentary History." Hansard, London, 1816, vol. xxvi.

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CHAPTER XI

SHERIDAN'S APOLOGY

(1787)

WHO was responsible for Fox's denial in the House of Commons of the marriage between the Prince of Wales and Mrs. Fitzherbert? The question even now is one of considerable difficulty. Fox's apologists declare that he must have believed what he said to be true, as he was incapable of uttering a falsehood. The detractors of the Prince of Wales aver that he was wholly to blame; in their opinion the Prince's perfidy was double-dyed, for he not only lied to his friend, but betrayed the wife of his bosom. The truth will probably be found to lie between these two extremes. Both Fox and the Prince were in a sense responsible. There is little doubt that when Fox declared that he spoke "with direct authority" he alluded to the letter which the Prince wrote to him four days before his marriage. The Prince in his answer to Fox said: "Believe me, the world will soon be convinced that there not only is [not] but never was, any ground for these reports which of late have been so malevolently circulated."[1] Fox, in his speech, spoke of "malicious falsehoods" and "malignant calumnies," thus using much the same words as the Prince had used in his letter.

It has been suggested that Fox was ignorant of the ceremony of December 15, 1785; but that he had, through the Duchess of Devonshire, heard of the scene at Carlton House in the autumn of 1784, when the Prince put a ring on Mrs. Fitzherbert's finger and made her promise to become his wife, and he had that in his mind when he denied the marriage "*in toto*, in point of fact as well as law." But even the Carlton House scene constituted "a sort of ceremony," and Fox had most positively declared the marriage "never did happen in any way whatsoever." Perhaps he thought that while he was about this business he had better do it thoroughly, and leave no possible pretext for the question

[1] Letter from the Prince of Wales to Mr. Fox, December 11, 1785.

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to be raised again. For the moment he succeeded, for no one thought that the charge would be met with so sweeping a denial.

Fox's triumph was short-lived. When he left the House of Commons that same evening he strolled up to Brooks's Club, and there he met, it is said, Orlando Bridgeman (afterwards Lord Bradford), who accosted him with these words: "Mr. Fox, I hear that you have denied in the House the Prince's marriage to Mrs. Fitzherbert. You have been misinformed; I was at the marriage." [1] How Fox met this it is impossible to say. Some have represented him as giving way to a violent outburst of indignation at the duplicity practised upon him, and have declared that he broke off his friendship with the Prince in consequence, and did not speak to him for a year. Unfortunately the facts do not bear out this theory. Fox still continued to correspond with the Prince. As late as May 10 (ten days after the scene in the House of Commons) we find affectionate letters passing between them on the subject of the Prince's debts. If Fox had been so virtuously indignant as his admirers represent him to have been, he would certainly have thrown up the whole affair, and let the Prince get his debts paid as best he could. But Fox knew too well the unstable character of his royal friend to have been greatly surprised at this revelation of his shiftiness. He may have felt indignant at the trick played on him, but his indignation was probably seasoned with a cynical amusement. The Prince's letter denying his marriage, though it was written before the marriage took place, had served Fox's purpose; it had enabled him to publicly deny the fact from "direct authority"; it had served to clear him and the Whig leaders from the suspicion of having been privy to it, and it had greatly relieved the minds of his followers in the House of Commons, whose allegiance had been sorely strained. Sir Gilbert Elliot, for instance, writes that he had been much distressed by "the constitutional dangers and doubts belonging to this most equivocal condition of things"; he thought the Prince had committed a "heavy offence," all too serious to be excused "by *levity* or the *passions* of youth." He rejoiced, therefore, to hear the charge denied so definitely.

[1] If he were present it was outside the door.

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"Fox," he says "declared by authority from the Prince, in the fullest and most unequivocal manner, that there was not the smallest foundation of any sort for the story of the marriage with Mrs. Fitzherbert . . . and in a word denied, positively from the Prince himself, the whole of this slander in words so strong and so unqualified that we must believe him. . . . I think yesterday was a very good day for the Prince, as the story of Mrs. Fitzherbert was what staggered great numbers. . . ." He adds: "This conversation leaves Mrs. Fitzherbert in an awkward way; but for my own part I feel much better satisfied with her conduct now than I did before" [1] — surely a dark saying. Fox was too astute a politician not to be aware of the advantage he had gained for himself and his party by his uncompromising denial. Nothing could be further from his thoughts than to sacrifice the effect of his words by any consideration for Mrs. Fitzherbert. The burden of the falsehood did not rest on his shoulders, but on those of the Prince.

The Prince found the burden heavy enough. During the progress of the debate in the House of Commons on the eventful evening of April 30, the Prince was kept informed of all that passed. Messengers were continually going to and fro between Carlton House and Westminster. Immediately the debate was over, Sheridan and Grey went to see him. They must have told him of Fox's denial of the marriage, though they probably did not tell him of the strong words which Fox had used. The Prince seems to have acquiesced without protest; he was glad that the danger was over. We find him writing to Fox at twelve o'clock the same evening, making an appointment to see him next morning.

"*April* 30, 1787,
Monday night, 12 *o'clock*.

"MY DEAR CHARLES, — I beg to see you for five minutes to-morrow after I have seen Marsham and Powys, whom I beg you will desire to be at Carlton House at one o'clock to-morrow. When I see you I will relate to you what has passed between my Friend and me relative to y^e^ seeing you. I feel more comfortable by Sheridan and Grey's account of what has passed to-day. I have had a distant insinuation that some sort

[1] "Life and Letters of Sir Gilbert Elliot," *op. cit.*

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of message, or terms, are to be proposed to me to-morrow. If you come a little after two you will be sure to find me. — Ever affectionately yours,

"GEORGE P."

From this letter it would seem that the Prince took, or affected to take, the matter lightly. The thought uppermost was not the betrayal of Mrs. Fitzherbert, but the payment of his debts. All the same, the Prince was not easy in his mind as to how Mrs. Fitzherbert would take the news, and he certainly did a wise thing in telling her of it himself at the earliest opportunity. Mrs. Fitzherbert had then no town-house, and was staying "with her friend and relative the Hon. Mrs. Butler." "The Prince," we are told, "called the morning after the denial of the marriage in the House of Commons by Mr. Fox. He went up to Mrs. Fitzherbert, and taking hold of both her hands and caressing her, said, 'Only conceive, Maria, what Fox did yesterday. He went down to the House and denied that you and I were man and wife! Did you ever hear of such a thing?" Mrs. Fitzherbert made no reply, but changed countenance and turned pale." [1] She knew instinctively that her fate was sealed, and what this public repudiation meant to her. Her silence doubtless moved the Prince more than any words. Tears were always ready to spring to his eyes and vows and protestations to his lips. He proceeded to disavow Fox to her and all his works.

The denial of the marriage was serious enough in itself, but when, later in the day, Mrs. Fitzherbert became aware of the terms in which Fox had made that denial, and how he had left her no loophole to escape from a shameful situation, compromising alike her religion and her honour, her indignation and reproaches knew no bounds. She saw herself not only cruelly betrayed, but publicly degraded. "This public degradation of Mrs. Fitzherbert," says Lord Stourton, "so compromised her character and religion, and irritated her feelings, that she determined to break off all connection with the Prince, and she was only induced to receive him again into her confidence, by repeated assurances that Mr. Fox had never been authorised to make the declaration; and the friends of Mrs.

[1] Langdale, *op. cit.*

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Fitzherbert assured her, that, in this discrepancy as to the assertion of Mr. Fox and the Prince, she was bound to accept the word of her husband." [1]

Mrs. Fitzherbert's dislike of Fox now deepened into abhorrence, and she vowed that she never could, or would, forgive him. "She said," writes Sir Philip Francis, who later tried to make peace between them, "that, by his unauthorised declaration in the House of Commons, he had rolled her in the kennel like a street-walker; that he knew that every word he said was a lie; and so on, in a torrent of virulence which it was vain for me to encounter, so I gave up the point and made my retreat as well and as fast as I could." [2]

Nor did she forgive the Prince easily, though he swore to her that Fox had acted entirely without his authority. This of course was untrue, but it was true that he had no idea that Fox would use language so unnecessarily strong. When the Prince heard it he was greatly annoyed, and was eager to make all possible amends. He sent for Grey, who found the Prince tremendously agitated, and pacing in a hurried manner up and down the room. He at once explained his object in sending for Grey. It was to induce him to frame some sort of explanation for Fox's denial of his marriage the previous evening — to modify in some way the terms of that denial, so that Mrs. Fitzherbert might be pacified. "Charles certainly went too far last night," he said. "You, my dear Grey, shall explain it," and then in distinct tones,[3] though with prodigious agitation, owned that a ceremony had taken place. Grey observed that Fox must unquestionably suppose that he had authority for *all* he said; and that if there had been any mistake it could only be rectified by his Royal Highness speaking to Fox himself, and setting him right on such matters as had been misunderstood

[1] "I told her," adds Lord Stourton, "that I understood there was a scrap of paper from the Prince to Mr. Fox; that Sir John Throckmorton, a friend of his, had assured me of the fact of the Prince's wishing much to obtain possession of it; but though written on a dirty scrap of paper, it was much too valuable to be parted with. She said that she rather doubted the fact" (Langdale's "Memoir," in which is incorporated Lord Stourton's "Narrative"). This scrap of paper was probably the letter which the Prince had written to Fox previous to his marriage, and which was found among Fox's papers after his death.

[2] "Memoirs of Sir Philip Francis."

[3] "As Grey," adds Lord Holland, "has since the Prince's (George IV.'s) death assured me."

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between them.[1] "No other person can," he added, "be employed without questioning Mr. Fox's veracity, which nobody, I presume, is prepared to do." But to discuss the matter with Fox was the last thing the Prince desired. Grey probably knew this, and like all the Prince's friends he was delighted at the public denial of the marriage, whether it were true or untrue. He says, "I expressly told him (the Prince) how prejudicial the continuance of the discussion must be to him, and positively refused to do what he wished." This refusal "chagrined, disappointed, and agitated the Prince exceedingly." He terminated the interview abruptly and threw himself on a sofa, muttering, "Well, if nobody else will, Sheridan must." The Prince never forgave Grey for his refusal and the implied rebuke, and nearly half a century later, when Grey was the powerful Minister and the Prince was King, there still existed a coolness between them.

The Prince sent for the pliant Sheridan, who readily promised to smooth away the effect of Fox's words as soon as occasion arose, and with that promise the Prince had to be content. To Fox he said nothing. Annoyed though he was with him for his excess of zeal, he was much too useful to quarrel with at such a crisis. He must wait, at any rate, until Fox had secured the payment of his debts by Parliament.

This matter proceeded apace. Both the King and Pitt felt that the bold stand taken by the Prince and his friends had cut the ground from beneath their feet. The Prince's necessities had extorted from him a complete denial of the marriage, and the King's own measure, the Royal Marriage Act, had not been openly set at defiance. The price had been paid. What mattered it that its payment involved the sacrifice of a woman's honour? The King was now all complacence. Pitt sent a gracious message to the Prince full of explanations and apologies, to which the Prince haughtily replied in much the same terms as before, "He did not receive verbal messages, but if the Minister had any business with him he might come himself." This might have led to further unpleasantness had not the Duchess of Gordon diplomatically arranged matters. Pitt came to see the Prince and assured him of his goodwill. Com-

[1] "Memoirs of the Whig Party," by Lord Holland.

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RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN

(*After the Painting by* Sir JOSHUA REYNOLDS)

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pliments passed on both sides, and then Pitt went to the King. A Cabinet Council was held, and a message was sent to the Prince, that his wishes would be complied with.

On the strength of this assurance, on May 4, Alderman Newnham withdrew his motion in the House of Commons. We read:[1] —

"As soon as *Mr. Pitt* came into the House a profound silence took place, although there were upwards of four hundred members assembled. *Mr. Alderman Newnham* rose and said: —

"'Sir, I am extremely happy that the motion which I was to have had the honour of making to-day is no longer necessary, and it is with a most sincere and heartfelt satisfaction that I inform the House that I decline bringing it forward.'

"Expressions of joy and satisfaction were heard on all sides. *Mr. Drake* began with saying that 'as he was one who had joined his feeble voice' — as *Mr. Drake* had a most powerful voice, and always spoke uncommonly loud, there was a universal roar of laughter, in which *Mr. Drake*, with equal good humour, joined, then rallied by saying that 'undoubtedly his voice was not feeble by nature, but most feeble when weighed with the little importance of the person who possessed it. But he joined his *hearty* voice in congratulation, and declared his unfeigned joy in what had occurred. The excessive gladness of his heart was superior to eloquence, and the pleasantness of his sensations almost deprived him of the power of uttering his sentences intelligibly.'

"*Mr. Pitt* 'readily concurred in the joy which the hon. gentleman expressed.' *Mr. Fox* said 'that all must feel the highest satisfaction; but he added that it would remain to be seen by substantial acts whether their motion were necessary or not.' *Mr. Rolle* introduced into the general harmony a jarring note. 'He tempered his satisfaction by observing that if it should hereafter appear that any concession had been made, humiliating to the country or dishonourable in itself, he would be the first man to stand up and stigmatise it as it deserved.' *Mr. Pitt* 'assured him that it was not so.'"

Then Sheridan rose for the purpose of carrying out the

[1] "Parliamentary History," vol. xxvi., 1786–1788, from which the following quotations are taken.

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delicate and difficult task with which the Prince had entrusted him. He was "to say something" which, while it would leave Fox's denial of the marriage unimpaired, would yet soothe the irritated feelings of Mrs. Fitzherbert. To do this without bringing up Rolle was a feat which taxed even the ingenuity of Sheridan. However, he got through it creditably.

Mr. Sheridan began by saying that: "He could not but believe that there existed on that day but one feeling and one sentiment in the House, that of heartfelt satisfaction at the auspicious conclusion to which the business was understood to be brought . . . *Mr. Sheridan*, however, wished it to be understood that though his Royal Highness felt the most perfect satisfaction at the prospect before him . . . yet did he also desire it to be distinctly remembered that no attempt had at any time been made to screen any part of his conduct, actions, or situation, from their view; that he even offered to answer himself (in the House of Lords) any question that might be put to him. That no such idea had been pursued, that no such inquiry had been adopted, was a point which did credit to the decorum and dignity of Parliament." [So far all had been plain sailing, but now Sheridan came to the most delicate part of his task.] *Mr. Sheridan* continued: "But while his Royal Highness's feelings had been doubtless considered on the occasion, he must take the liberty of saying, however much some might think it a subordinate consideration, that there was *another Person* entitled in every honourable and delicate mind to the same attention, whom he would not otherwise attempt to describe, or allude to, except to affirm that ignorance or vulgar malice alone could have persevered in attempting to injure one on whose conduct truth could fix no just reproach, and whose character claimed, and was entitled to, the truest and most general respect."

Sheridan's words made a sensation in the House, but the accounts of how they were received differ. His speech was followed, we are told in one account, by a murmur of general approval, and his remarks were felt to be in the best of taste. On the other hand Daniel Pulteney writes to the Duke of Rutland the same day,[1] May 4, 1787: "What Mrs. Fitzherbert

[1] Rutland MSS., *op. cit.*

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can do in her present embarrassed situation I cannot pretend to guess, but Sheridan attempted, very foolishly, to repair the statement respecting the marriage by saying to-day in the House her situation was 'truly respectable,' at which every one smiled."

Sheridan's explanation or apology, call it what we will, served to throw doubt on Fox's denial. It has been well said, "Mr. Fox had declared that a lady living with the Prince to all exterior appearance in the habits of matrimonial connection had not the sanction of any canonical forms to support her; whilst, on the other hand, Sheridan reversed the picture, by representing her as a paragon of chastity, the possessor of every virtue, and the ornament of her sex."

Fox could not have been well pleased to hear Sheridan's encomiums. But where women were concerned, he was always a cynic, and he appears to have felt it his duty to let Sheridan's speech make no difference in his course of action, and to do his best to secure the payment of the Prince's debts. These debts were settled a few weeks later, after some further hesitation and delay, due, Pitt afterwards said, to the shiftiness of the King. George III. succeeded in the end in shelving the greater portion of them off his shoulders on to Parliament. A fresh schedule was prepared for the King "with the debts of honour left out," and on May 21, 1787, the Prime Minister brought down to the House the royal message recommending a discharge of the Prince of Wales's embarrassments on the strength of a "well-grounded expectation" that he would not contract debts in future. The House of Commons, in response, voted £161,000 in payment of the Prince's debts and £60,000 for the completion of Carlton House. The King on his part agreed to give the Prince another £10,000 a year out of his own Civil List.

The Prince hailed this relief with delight, though the increase of his income was too small to be of any real use, and the sum voted for Carlton House was only a third of what was necessary, and there was no grant for his new Pavilion at Brighton. But he probably regarded the Parliamentary grant only as an instalment which would serve to tide him over his present difficulty.

The prodigal son was now taken back to the paternal fold, and that all might see that peace was restored to the royal family, the reconciliation between the Prince of Wales and his

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parents was as public as their quarrel. The chief personages in the Prince's household attended the drawing-room on May 24, and the King and Queen received them with great affability. The next day the Prince had an interview with the King of three hours' duration, after which he was presented to his mother and sisters; everything was forgiven and all was harmony.

By Mrs. Fitzherbert the Prince was also forgiven, but she did not yield without difficulty. Sheridan's speech in the House of Commons, though it had soothed her wounded feelings, had not satisfied her. How could it do so? How could anything do so short of an avowal of the marriage as public as the denial? But even she saw that the political exigencies of the situation made this impossible. Her first thought was to break off all connection with the Prince, and had she consulted her own dignity and happiness she would have done so. For a time she would not see him, and he became quite ill from the agitation brought on by her refusal. He had one of his violent paroxysms, and had to be bled. Alarming rumours were circulated about his health, of course greatly exaggerated. "He is better to-day, but still in great danger," wrote Thomas Orde to the Duke of Rutland, May 28, 1787.[1] The Prince vowed he would kill himself unless Mrs. Fitzherbert forgave him. These manœuvres had the effect of persuading her — perhaps she was willing to be persuaded — that the Prince was not really to blame in the matter at all, it was all the work of the wicked Fox. She yielded to the Prince's prayers and to the entreaties of their friends, and a reconciliation took place; but though of a forgiving disposition, she absolutely refused to forgive Fox, and made it a condition that she should not be forced to meet him. This the Prince could promise with safety, for Fox, disgusted with what he considered to be the Prince's ingratitude, and not caring to face Mrs. Fiztherbert, absented himself from Carlton House, and later went abroad.

Short of a public disavowal of Fox's speech the Prince did everything to cast a doubt upon the lie told in Parliament. It was understood among Mrs. Fitzherbert's intimates and his own, that the denial had been made for political purposes only, and, taking their cue from their royal master, the minions of

[1] Rutland MSS., *op. cit.*

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Carlton House went about everywhere whispering that Fox had exceeded his instructions.

The reconciliation between the Prince and Mrs. Fitzherbert reems to have been effected after a few weeks, for Lord Ailesbury writes, May 25: "I met the Prince of Wales, as I went past the Queen's House, in his phaeton, in which I understood he took Mrs. Fitzherbert to Epsom races, and on his return, after a cold dinner, he was at the Duchess of Gordon's ball, where my daughter saw him dance. Mrs. Fitzherbert danced a good deal." [1]

Again we read of a grand ball and supper at Sir Sampson and Lady Gideon's. At supper Mrs. Fitzherbert sat with the Prince at the head of the table between her host and hostess. It was noticed that she wore white roses in her hair and at her breast; all her intimate friends were present, and the company vied with each other in paying her homage. This supper was facetiously known as the "Feast of Reconciliation." Such was the belief in the goodness of her character that she gained respect rather than lost it by Fox's denial of her marriage. "She informed me," wrote Lord Stourton, "that the public supported her by their conduct on this occasion; for at no part of her life were their visits so numerous at her house as on the day which followed Mr. Fox's memorable speech; and, to use her own expression, the knocker of her door was never still during the whole day." She was generally regarded as a cruelly injured woman, the victim of political expediency. Not only did her friends, like the Duchess of Cumberland and the Duchess of Devonshire, hasten to show their sympathy, but the Duchess of Portland, who had hitherto held aloof, and whose husband had quarrelled with the Prince, now called on Mrs. Fitzherbert, and asked her to her house. By so doing she showed to all that neither she nor the Duke believed what Fox had said. Lord and Lady Sefton, who had hitherto avoided Mrs. Fitzherbert since her marriage, followed suit. The Tory Duchess of Gordon, a great friend of Pitt's and of Queen Charlotte's, loudly proclaimed that Fox had lied, and showed her belief in Mrs. Fitzherbert by inviting her to the ball already mentioned. The Duke of Gloucester, the King's brother, who, with his

[1] "Diary of Thomas, Earl of Ailesbury." Ailesbury MSS. Historical MSS. Commission, vol. ii.

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Duchess, was at Florence, wrote to Mrs. Fitzherbert a little note, and sent her a present, which, coming at this time, was of great significance:—

H.R.H. The Duke of Gloucester, to Mrs. Fitzherbert.

"FLORENCE, *May* 24, 1787.

"DEAR MADAM, — I take the opportunity of a private hand to desire your acceptance of a Cestus, done in oyster shell. I hope you will think it pretty. Pray send us by the safest opportunity some account to trust to of the present negotiation. I hope the Prince will be made easy in his affairs. I sincerely hope you are happy and well, for I know you deserve it. I remain, dear Madam, your humble Servant,

"WILLIAM HENRY." [1]

Thus the King's two brothers and their wives, and some of the greatest ladies of society, on both sides of politics, showed their sympathy with Mrs. Fitzherbert in this crisis, and no doubt it was their support which enabled her to bear with admirable temper and dignity the cruel imputation which had been cast upon her. The old Roman Catholic families, which included some of the greatest names in the peerage, rallied round her. They considered that she had been made to suffer on account of her religion. Even those who had thought her imprudent and unwise in consenting to such a marriage supported her now that the *fact* of the marriage was called into question. To the Archbishop of Canterbury it all seemed "very odd," particularly as he noted "the lady is more received than ever she was, and stands more forward." To those who accepted Fox's denial it was naturally "odd."

Though these were few in London society, among the general public they were numerous. And from them Mrs. Fitzherbert had to run the gauntlet of much ignorant criticism and public odium. Gillray published (May 21, 1787) a political print entitled "Dido Forsaken. *Sic transit Gloria Reginae.*" Mrs. Fitzherbert, grasping a crucifix, is seated all forlorn on a rock. A breeze blown by Pitt and Dundas carries away her coronet and feathers, as Princess of Wales. In a boat named

[1] This letter was found among Mrs. Fitzherbert's papers after her death.

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Honour, bound for Windsor, sail away the Prince, Fox, who steers, Lord North, and Burke. The Prince says, "I never saw her in my life." Fox cries "No, never in his life, damme." Burke and North echo, "No, never." On the ground lie fetters, an axe, rods, and a harrow "for the conversion of heretics" — another allusion to Mrs. Fitzherbert's religion, which, indeed, was the prime cause of all her troubles.

A great many ill-informed articles appeared in the English papers, unnecessary to be quoted here, but a French paper, *Le Courier de l'Europe*, which was supposed to represent in some measure the views of the foreign Courts, contained the following venomous paragraph: — "La fable du prétendu mariage de S.A. Mgr. le Prince de Galles, a enfin été expliquée en plein Parlement de manière à ne plus laisser de doute. C'est une explication, qui est d'autant plus facheuse pour Mad. Fitz. que l'on a supposé des liens entre S.A.R. et cette dame pour lesquels on n'avoit pas encore prononcés. Jusqu'ici Mad. F. a était reçue dans toutes les societés, où étoit invité le Prince, mais *il ne sera guère* possible aujourd'hui qu'elle jouisse les mêmes avantages, à moins que cette première explication n'en entraine une autre et que la prétendue intimité de S.A.R. ne soit presentée sous couleurs admissibles en bonne compagnie."

This paper, it will be seen, made no allusion to Sheridan's apology. In any case its forecast was wrong. Mrs. Fitzherbert was more generally received than before.

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CHAPTER XII

A QUEEN OF HEARTS

(1787–1789)

THE Prince and Mrs. Fitzherbert left London earlier than usual this year (1787). The first days of July found them at Brighton, the Prince at his Pavilion, and Mrs. Fitzherbert at her little house hard by. They were followed by a numerous company. Marvellous was the change which every year now wrought in Brighton. This year it was filled to overflowing: not a house or lodging was to be had, and its virtues as a health resort were extolled to the skies. "We have never seen H.R.H. in better health or more buoyant spirits than in his evening walks on the Steine," writes a journal; "his company on these promenades, exclusive of the gentlemen of his suite, was Mrs. F[itzherbert], the Countess of Talbot, and Lady Stowell." [1] The Prince and Mrs. Fitzherbert promenaded daily on the Steine, which was the meeting-place of all the Prince's friends. Brighton was fast becoming the favourite resort of many families of distinction, who took houses there, such as the Marlborough family, the Duke of Grafton (of "Junius" notoriety), the Tankervilles, the Downshires, the Clares, and the Duke of Bedford. The Prince often appeared on the Steine leaning on the arm of the Duke, who was a great friend both of the Prince and of Mrs. Fitzherbert.

The Prince indulged in healthy pleasures. Cricket was one of his favourite pastimes this year, and many were the matches played in the Pavilion Gardens. Every morning, weather permitting, the Prince bathed in the sea, and his swimming was superintended by an amphibious old sailor called Smoker. The following anecdote of Smoker has come down to us: — A boisterous night was succeeded by a very rough sea, and the

[1] *Morning Herald*, July 24, 1787.

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MARTHA GUNN
THE BRIGHTON BATHING-WOMAN

WELTJE
THE PRINCE'S COOK AND MAJOR-DOMO

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waves broke upon the beach with great violence. The Prince notwithstanding repaired to his usual bathing-place, where Smoker was waiting to receive him. "I shall bathe this morning, Smoker." "No, no, your Royal Highness," replied Smoker, "it is too dangerous." "But I will," said the Prince, and was proceeding towards the machine, when the doughty Smoker stepped in front of him, and putting himself in a boxing attitude (for the fellow could box as well as he could swim), expostulated with the Prince as follows: — "Come, come, this won't do. I'll be damned if you shall bathe. What do you think your royal father would think of me if you were drowned? He would say, 'This is all owing to you, Smoker. If you had taken proper care of him, poor George would still be alive.'" [1] The Prince good-naturedly desisted. He often related the anecdote to his friends.

Smoker had his counterpart in Martha Gunn, the celebrated bathing-woman of Brighton, who superintended the marine ablutions of many beautiful ladies, among others of Mrs. Fitzherbert, whom she always addressed as "Mrs. Prince." Martha Gunn was in high favour with the Prince, who often joked with her on the subject of her calling with more wit than delicacy. Martha was what was known as a "ticket holder," and she had the traditional right of entry to the royal kitchen at the Pavilion, where she was always well treated. The following story is told of one of her visits: — "When in the kitchen one afternoon Martha was presented with a pound of butter. The Prince at that moment was seen entering the kitchen, and Martha, whispering to the servants, quickly deposited the butter in her pocket. This little bit of legerdemain was, doubtless, observed by the Prince; and, being ripe for a joke, he speedily entered into conversation with Martha, getting the 'butter side' of her, and edging her nearer and nearer to the great kitchen fire. It was a sad dilemma. The Prince kept talking, and the butter kept melting! But the venerable dame — whose rueful countenance doubtless betrayed her sensations — was afraid to move. External evidence on the floor, however, soon after showed the Prince that his design was accomplished, and he bade the old lady 'good day.' The internal evidence he was contented to

[1] "Brighton in the Olden Time (*pamphlet*), By an Inhabitant thereof."

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leave to Martha herself. What *this* was may be imagined, but deponent sayeth not." [1]

Despite his love of a practical joke, occasionally at his servants' expense, the Prince was adored by all his retainers for his friendliness and kindly interest in their welfare. No master ever had more devoted servants than he.

Of the Prince's kindness to his servants there are many anecdotes. Once at Brighton a stable-boy named Tom Croys had been dismissed by the head groom for stealing oats. Going round his stables one day the Prince noticed the boy was gone, and inquired the cause. When he was told, he was extremely angry that any one in his service should be dismissed without his knowledge, and commanded that the boy should be sent for. The boy, tears trickling down his face, was brought before his royal master. The Prince reprimanded him, asked if it were a first offence, and then said: "Tom, if you are taken back to my stables again, can I trust you?" The boy promised amendment. Then said the Prince: "Go back and recover your character. Be diligent, be honest, and make me your friend; and, hark 'ee, Tom, I will take care that no one shall ever taunt you with what is passed." The boy went back, and became an honest and trustworthy servant.

Mrs. Fitzherbert received the warmest welcome this year at Brighton. No one believed Fox's denial of her marriage, and every one was anxious, by increased respect, to make amends for the wrong done her. The public repudiation "in the House of Commons," wrote an old Brighton *habitué* in after years, "did not appear to have any more effect upon the Brighton community than it produced on herself. High authorities in the fashionable world — confidential friends of the lady — mysteriously intimated a knowledge that the denial was a sham, and as the heir-apparent still continued to be accessible by paying attention to her, the excitement respecting Mrs. Fitzherbert and the Prince remained unabated. . . . I can recall her to mind at this time," continues the writer, "radiant in her brilliant loveliness — her delicate features, her pure complexion, her exquisite brown eyes, her serene expression, combining to produce a face that impressed every spectator with a delightful

[1] "The Brighton Pavilion and its Royal Associations." By J. G. Bishop.

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sense of amiability and tenderness; while her figure, set off to the best advantage by the costume of the time, was always distinguishable from those of the aristocratic beauties by whom she was generally surrounded, by its singular dignity and grace. Though nobody ventured to call her 'Princess,' every one of her innumerable admirers of both sexes enthroned her as a queen. She was recognised as the 'Queen of Hearts' throughout the length and breadth of fast-increasing Brighton, and a more loyal people it was impossible for a Sovereign to have. They honoured her, they almost worshipped her. Proud was the aspirant of Fashion who succeeded in obtaining her notice in public; honoured the devotee of gentility who could boast the least acquaintance with her in private. To be invited to meet her at the palatial Pavilion was acknowledged to be a covetable distinction, but to be welcomed by her to her modest house was regarded as a precious privilege. She never had an enemy, and was constantly increasing her circle of friends."

The late Mr. Shergold of Brighton, who died within the memory of many, has also given an enthusiastic account of Mrs. Fitzherbert as she appeared about this period.

"I have seen Mrs. Fitzherbert," he writes, "many a time and oft. Once I had the pleasure to see that beautiful creature in a way that made a deep impression on me. I was going from Castle Square towards the Steine, and had just arrived at the corner of the Castle Tavern, and was turning, when Mrs. Fitzherbert, accompanied by her brother, Mr. Smythe, appeared. I was then about eighteen, a very susceptible age, when a man feels the beauty of woman, the beauty of art, the beauty of poetry, the beauty of everything really beautiful, if ever he feels it at all. The lady was walking — the day was splendid, the sun was at its meridian — there was not a cloud. All this I remember well, and I remember well also, that at the moment the most beautiful object in the world seemed to be Mrs. Fitzherbert. Had I seen the lady sitting or standing I should doubtless have thought her beautiful; but her fine and graceful person was in motion — her countenance, at all times singularly expressive, was unusually animated by the fineness of the weather, and, as she came suddenly upon me, with all her personal attractions heightened by the same adventitious setting-

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off, I saw her more than usually beautiful . . . She was a woman who needed nothing but a diadem to make her a queen."

Mrs. Fitzherbert was in fact the recognised queen of the fashionable society in Brighton. All who went there paid her court. This was so well understood that the Duke of Rutland, who was Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, wrote from Dublin to his Duchess [1] not to go to Brighton, as in that event the Prince of Wales would ask her to visit Mrs. Fitzherbert, "which I would have you avoid, but I hear it is indispensable with him, so you had better be silent on that head until he asks you — if he should do so at all — and then I think your state of health will be a good excuse." [2] And again: "If you go to bathe in the sea, do not go to Brighthelmstone, because you will be under a difficulty about Mrs. Fitzherbert."

But the Duchess did not heed her lord. She was a stately beauty of the type of a Grecian goddess, haughty and very self-willed. We find her in July at Brighton, and the Duke still writing (July 29), "I hope you will not find embarrassment about Mrs. Fitzberbert." So far from suffering any "embarrassment," we find the Duchess joining the Prince's select party at the Lewes races, a party which included Mrs. Fitzherbert, the Duke and Duchess of Cumberland, and the Princesse de Lamballe, "who was particularly distinguished through the day by the *enviable* attentions of the Duke of Queensberry," [3] Lord and Lady Abergavenny, the Countess of Talbot, Lord Clermont, &c.

One night early in August, when the Prince was supping at the Pavilion, seated between the Princesse de Lamballe and Mrs. Fitzherbert, the news came to him that his brother Frederick, Duke of York, had come back to England from the Continent after a banishment of seven years. The Prince at once posted off to Windsor to welcome his brother. The Duke had been sent into exile shortly before his elder brother came of age, because, in the King's opinion, the brothers acted and

[1] Mary Isabella, daughter of the fourth Duke of Beaufort, *m.* 1775, Charles, fourth Duke of Rutland, K.G., Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, who died at Dublin later in the same year, 1787. The Duke's objections, it may be noted, were official rather than personal, the Duchess being the wife of the Viceroy.

[2] Rutland MSS., *op. cit.*

[3] *The Morning Herald*, August 6, 1787.

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reacted badly on one another. The experiment had not succeeded in the case of the Duke of York, for he achieved at Osnabrück, Hanover, and Paris, a reputation for wildness, so great as to astonish even Mirabeau. His reputation was probably exaggerated — it was certainly belied by his appearance. There is a picture of him by Sir Joshua Reynolds at this time which depicts him as a tall, slim youth, with a slight stoop, delicate features, and a refined, sensitive mouth. There is nothing in the picture of the grossness which makes itself apparent in the better-known portraits of the Duke in later life.

The Duke of York, despite his failings, which were those of most young princes of his age, had many fine qualities. Like the rest of George III.'s sons, he was handsome, high-spirited, and good-hearted. His manners lacked the grace and courtesy of those of the Prince of Wales. He was brusque, boisterous, and broad in conversation, but he was more truthful than his elder brother, more straightforward, more sincere, and he never forsook a friend. He made many mistakes in later life, but his friends loved him, and one said of him that "he always had the instincts of an English gentleman." He was the favourite son of George III., who was never tired of contrasting him favourably with the Prince of Wales. One wonders, if he were so fond of him, why he ever sent him away. The description of his home-coming is Arcadian in its display of family affection; the happy father embraced his long absent son, the Queen and her daughters joined in the raptures. The Prince of Wales had posted all through the night from Brighton, and when he reached Windsor the meeting between the brothers, we are told, was "most affecting." After regarding one another for a moment in silence they embraced, and the Prince was moved to tears. Separation had only strengthened their fraternal affection, and it was soon apparent that if the Duke of York had to choose between his father and his elder brother he would throw in his lot unhesitatingly with the latter.

As soon as the family gathering at Windsor broke up the Prince took his long-lost brother to Brighton and introduced him to Mrs. Fitzherbert. Thus began a friendship which lasted through life; the Duke formed a high idea of Mrs. Fitzherbert's character and judgment. He must early have known that some form of marriage had taken place between her and

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his brother, and a less honourable man might have turned the knowledge to his advantage. The Duke was, as Fox reminded the Prince of Wales in his memorable letter, the King's favourite son, and the next after him in succession to the throne. It was a disputed legal point whether the Royal Marriage Act abrogated the clause in the Act of Settlement which made the Prince who contracted a marriage with a Roman Catholic ineligible for the succession, but whether it did, or did not, the Duke of York, stout Protestant though he was, never raised the question. He was the last man in the world to betray a confidence, or to push forward his own interests at the expense of those of his brother. He had a sincere regard and affection for Mrs. Fitzherbert also, and would never willingly do anything to cause her pain. He invariably treated her with that deference and respect which a man, however dissolute he may be, shows, if he is a gentleman, to a good woman. Later, the Duke of York rendered Mrs. Fitzherbert material service, by becoming a medium of communication between her and his parents. But that was not yet, for the King and Queen still regarded her coldly, and were anxious that all connection between her and the Prince should be broken off.

There were great rejoicings at Brighton during the summer that followed the Duke's return. The Prince celebrated his birthday at the Pavilion by a sumptuous entertainment, and in the evening the town was illuminated. But the gaiety never degenerated into license, and Mrs. Fitzherbert's good influence continued as strong as ever. This improvement was noted with great candour by the press. "The Prince of Wales gains many hearts by his affability and good-humour. His company is much better than it used to be, and he is certainly more sober in his libations to Bacchus. Mrs. Fitzherbert looks more elegant than ever. One could indeed hardly help exclaiming with the army of Mahomet II., when he showed them his Irene, 'Such a woman is worth a kingdom.'" [1]

Though Mrs. Fitzherbert was much attached to the Duke of York, it may be feared that his return after a while rather added to her trials than helped her. The royal brothers, in their joy at being re-united, when they got to London, plunged

[1] *Morning Post*, August 9, 1787.

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FREDERICK, DUKE OF YORK AND BISHOP OF OSNABRÜCK

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once more into riotous gaiety. Mrs. Fitzherbert suffered much in consequence, not only on the Prince's account but her own, for her natural refinement recoiled from these scenes of revelry. She was also subject at this time to annoyance from the fanaticism of the half-crazed Lord George Gordon, who had fomented the Gordon riots in 1780, which had been indirectly responsible for the death of Mrs. Fitzherbert's second husband. He now again tormented her because of her reported marriage to the Prince of Wales. He was at this time being prosecuted for a libel he had circulated concerning the Queen of France. He dragged into his defence, with a view of inflaming popular passion, the Prince of Wales's "Papistical wife," of whom he spoke with great freedom, and said that he desired her to attend the court and give evidence. When he was asked for what reason he wished Mrs. Fitzherbert to appear in court, he replied that he had had a conversation with her in Paris a few years ago concerning some intrigue between the French and British Courts, and he wished to substantiate what he had said. Of course Mrs. Fitzherbert refused to appear, but nothing daunted, Lord George called at her house in London and tried to serve a *subpœna* on her. He was turned out of doors by her servants, and he was also threatened with chastisement by her brother if he molested her further. The threat had its effect, for he did not go to her house again. But he wrote the following letter to Mr. Pitt: —

Lord George Gordon to the Right Hon. William Pitt, M.P.

"SIR, — Mr. Walter Smythe, brother to Mrs. Fitzherbert, came to my house in Welbeck Street this morning, accompanied by Mr. Acton, to be present whilst he informed me that he would call me to an account if I went to Mrs. Fitzherbert's house again, or wrote to her, or to him, or took liberties with their names in public, as Mrs. Fitzherbert was very much alarmed when my name was mentioned. I answered, that I looked upon this as a threatening visit; but that I must yet apply to Mrs. Fitzherbert, or himself, or Sir Carnaby Haggerston as often as I found occasion, till a written answer was sent to me concerning the *proper title* of their sister, just as if he had not called upon me. Some other conversation passed respecting

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the marriage; but this was the substance and result of the whole. I think it my duty to inform you, as Prime Minister, that you may be apprised of, and communicate to the House of Commons, the overbearing disposition of the Papists. I have the honour to be, Sir, your most obedient and humble servant,

"4 *o'clock, Friday, May* 4, 1788." "G. GORDON.

These were trials undoubtedly, yet Mrs. Fitzherbert had her compensations. The Prince was still devotedly attached to her, and her wishes were his law.

The year which followed (1788–1789) may be regarded as marking the highest point of her influence over the Prince. Her enemy (as she conceived him to be), Charles James Fox, was still abroad, "disgusted," as he said, "with the political situation," and indignant, so his friends said, at the way in which the Prince had used him for his purpose, and then given the lie to what he had stated in the House of Commons. For by every act and word, short of open acknowledgment of his marriage, the Prince seemed desirous of mitigating the force of Fox's declaration. He treated Mrs. Fitzherbert with all the deference which a man shows to his honoured wife. She was everywhere, by his command, treated with respect, which was only second to that shown to Royalty. He showered gifts upon her; had she wished it she might have had jewels worth a king's ransom. With part of the money given him by Parliament, the Prince took for her a mansion in Pall Mall, and decorated and furnished it in a style of magnificence which vied with Carlton House, though it was modified by her taste into a quiet and refined luxury. Here Mrs. Fitzherbert maintained an establishment which was semi-royal. She did not live alone; an elderly lady of good birth and irreproachable character, well known to the royal family, Miss Pigot, stayed in her house, accompanied her in public, and filled the position of companion, or rather of lady-in-waiting. All the wits and politicians, who were known as "the Prince's friends," paid her their homage, and all the place-hunters craved her favour with the Prince, recognising that she was all powerful. Yet she never once abused the trust placed in her, never thrust herself forward unduly, never asked for a place or position for a friend, unless that friend were qualified for it on other grounds than her

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friendship. Through all her prosperity she never lost her head, never presumed on her position, or used her influence for ignoble ends; never forgot a friend, and was always gracious, kindly, and unassuming. At her house in Pall Mall she entertained freely. Mary Frampton, who had known her as Mrs. Weld of Lulworth, describes one of these receptions in her "Journal": —

"When Mrs. Fitzherbert was living in Pall Mall, within a few doors of Carlton House, we were at one of the assemblies she gave, which was altogether the most splendid I was ever at. Attendants in green and gold, besides the usual livery servants, were stationed in the rooms and up the staircase to announce the company and carry about refreshments, &c. The house was most beautifully furnished; one room was hung with pucked blue satin. A whole-length picture of the Prince of Wales, and his bust, and that of the Duke of York, ornamented the dining-room. Her own manners ever remained quiet, civil, and unpretending; and in the days of her greatest influence she was never accused of using it improperly. The Prince and, I think, his brother the Duke of York, came in late to the assembly." [1]

In November 1789 the Prince and Mrs. Fitzherbert were at Brighton, surrounded by their friends, when news reached them of the alarming illness of the King. Throughout the autumn, strange rumours had been current in well-informed circles concerning the King, and these gradually filtered down through the clubs and coffee-houses to the general public. At a Levée, held early in November, the King behaved so strangely as to give all present the impression that his mind was disordered. Still his physicians did not interfere, and for nearly a fortnight later, the King was allowed to continue the round of his fatiguing duties without let or hindrance, with the result that he became worse every day. Every effort was made to conceal his condition, but in the King's immediate circle there was a dread of coming disaster. The Prince of Wales was kept in ignorance as long as possible, but at last came a report that the King was really out of his mind. Then he determined to see how matters stood for himself, and posted from Brighton to Windsor, where the Duke of York already was. He found the King's state to be worse than he anticipated. The unhappy monarch per-

[1] Frampton, *op. cit.*

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petually paced up and down, pouring out a stream of incoherent talk, until he rendered himself almost unintelligible from hoarseness. Still he was under no restraint. The arrival of the Prince at Windsor brought matters to a climax. In the evening, during dinner, the King suddenly, and without provocation, flew at his eldest son, seized him by the collar, and pushed him against the wall, violently demanding if he dared to prevent the King of England from speaking his mind. Instantly there was great confusion — the Queen fell into hysterics, the Princesses screamed, the Prince of Wales, as was his wont when agitated, burst into tears. The Duke of York and some of the courtiers intervened, and the King presently let his son go, and suffered himself to be led away to his room. That night he was quite mad, and, his physicians feared, in danger of his life.

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CHAPTER XIII

THE STRUGGLE FOR THE REGENCY

(1788–1789)

THE Prince of Wales suddenly found himself thrust into a position of responsibility. Instead of returning to Brighton next day, as he had intended, he remained at Windsor, and took the direction of affairs into his own hands. It is admitted that he behaved, at this trying juncture, with dignity and discretion. The bad news spread rapidly all over the kingdom. In London it was generally believed that the King's illness was of a fatal nature. Pitt thought so too; he realised that the King's death meant his own loss of power, for he could expect nothing from the Prince, whose wishes he had constantly thwarted. The Government was in a difficult situation, and its difficulty was increased by the uncertainty as to how the Lord Chancellor, Thurlow,[1] would act. His dislike and jealousy of Pitt were notorious, and he was quite ready to throw in his lot with the Prince's party should it prove to be the winning side. The Lord Chief Justice, Loughborough,[2] was also secretly hostile to Pitt.

Mrs. Fitzherbert, who had been left at Brighton, hastened up to London on receipt of the news from Windsor, so as to be in more direct communication with the Prince. The King's dangerous illness affected her only one degree less acutely than it affected the heir-apparent himself. The Prince had always promised her full reparation when it should be in his power, and now that his succession to the throne seemed imminent, the power would soon be in his hands. Whatever form that reparation took, it could not fail to influence profoundly her future life. Mrs. Fitzherbert was not an ambitious woman,

[1] Edward Thurlow, first Baron Thurlow, Lord Chancellor (1731–1806).

[2] Alexander Wedderburn, first Baron Loughborough, and first Earl of Rosslyn, sometime Lord Chancellor (1735–1805).

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nor was she one who sought her own interest, except where her good name was concerned. She did not care for wealth or power, and, though the prospect which now opened before her eyes might have dazzled any woman, she kept her head.

Mrs. Fitzherbert went to her house in Pall Mall, and was soon in communication with the Prince's friends. She brought with her from Brighton Sheridan and his wife, and they stayed with her for a time, "having," writes a contemporary, "no other habitation." The near prospect of place and emolument intoxicated the impecunious Sheridan. He acted as the Prince's confidential agent in London; while at Windsor the Prince had with him one of his equerries, Admiral Payne, familiarly known as "Jack Payne," who sent daily bulletins of the progress of the King's illness to the Prince's friends in London. This illness went from bad to worse, until it seemed that the King's death was only a question of hours. "The last stroke," wrote Payne to Loughborough with ill-disguised eagerness, "as I hear, from the *best* authority, cannot be far off. It is what everybody, in a situation to see, is obliged to wish as *the happiest possible termination to the melancholy scene.* The event we looked for last night is *postponed* perhaps for a short time." Yet even as Payne was writing, his confident anticipations were being falsified. The King, who was thought to be almost at his last gasp, fell into a profound sleep, from which he awoke much better. The crisis was passed. The next day the doctors pronounced him to be out of immediate danger, so far as his bodily health was concerned; but his mental affliction remained as bad, or worse, than before, and the physicians confessed that they considered it to be permanent.

The King's rally was a blow to the Prince and his friends. *He* decently masked his disappointment, but they did not conceal theirs. The new situation demanded a complete revision of plans, for a Regency, and not a sovereignty, was now the end in view. A council of the Prince's friends was hurriedly called at Bagshot. Thither came secretly the Prince and Payne from Windsor, and Sheridan and Mrs. Fitzherbert drove down from London. Lord Loughborough had been invited, but now that the King was better he was too cautious to come, and in a long despatch he advised the Prince to adopt "not dissimulation, but a certain reserve and guard upon the frankness of that amiable

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disposition, which is the ornament and delight of society." What took place at the meeting is not known, but no communication at that time seems to have been made by the Prince to the official heads of the Whig party. Sheridan had in fact, by his eagerness for place, and his anxiety to display his own importance and show his possession of the Prince's confidence, given offence to the Duke of Portland and other influential Whigs. But one important development followed on the Bagshot council. The Prince determined to consult Fox as to what should be done. The news could not have been welcome to Mrs. Fitzherbert, yet she must have seen that he was the only man to save the situation. To the Prince at such a crisis he was indispensable.

Fox was abroad, but a messenger had been sent to him on the sixth day after the King's outburst at Windsor, and since then courier after courier had been despatched to him in furious haste. Fox had been abroad for many months, and had planned for himself an Italian tour, in company with Mrs. Armitstead. Disgusted with affairs in England, he had purposely left no address. He received no letters and he read no newspapers. The first messenger despatched from Windsor traced Fox to Geneva, but lost track of him there. After many false scents he finally ran him to earth at Bologna.

Fox appreciated the gravity of the situation, and lost not a moment in obeying the Prince's summons. Turning his back on Italy and its delights, he started at once homeward. At Lyons he found another courier, with a letter telling him of the King's total loss of reason. He pressed on with all speed, leaving his own chariot for the ordinary post carriage so as to gain time, and finally reached London on November 24, having been nine days on the journey, a surprising feat considering the conditions of the roads, and the means of travel in those days. But the great exertion and the fatigues of the journey had told heavily on his health, and it was some time before he recovered from it.

Fox arrived in London just in time. Parliament, convened for November 20 (1788), had been prorogued until December 4, and this gave breathing time. Fox at once impressed upon the Prince the necessity of a reconciliation with the Duke of Portland, who had refused to help in the matter of the Prince's

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debts. The Prince behaved very handsomely. "Pray shake the Duke of Portland by the hand for me," he said, "and tell him that I hope everything that is past may be forgot between us." With the exception of the hasty visit to Bagshot, and an occasional escape to Carlton House, the Prince had all this time been detained at Windsor, where he fretted at the confinement. Meanwhile Pitt and the other Ministers had been down to Windsor, and had seen the King, but the Prince refused to see them. Soon after the Ministers' visit the King was removed to Kew, and placed by Pitt under the care of an ex-clergyman named Willis, who was a specialist in lunacy, and with his son had made some remarkable cures.

On the eve of the opening of Parliament, December 4, a Cabinet Council was held at Pitt's house, and as soon as it rose, a messenger was despatched to Kew with a letter for the Queen. Its purport was soon known to the Prince of Wales, and confirmed his suspicions that Pitt and the Queen were in league against him. The Queen wrote to her eldest son a letter to sound him, saying that she had been asked to take a share in the Regency, but that she thought it better to take no part in politics, but devote herself solely to the King in his sad condition. The Prince warily replied, that "her Majesty might assure herself that she should be considered as his Majesty's sole guardian, so long as the unhappy malady should continue." On the surface nothing could be more proper than these letters, but in the light of subsequent events one may read between the lines, and see in them the beginning of the long and unedifying struggle between mother and son.

Parliament reassembled on December 4, and it at once became apparent that the object of Pitt was to gain time. The report of the physicians was laid before the House. It was very vague, but with one exception (Warren) the doctors inclined to the hope that the King might recover. The House was adjourned, and when it met again Pitt proposed a committee to examine into the precedents. This step was violently opposed by Fox, who declared that as the heir-apparent was of full age and capacity, he had *the right* to exercise the governing power, so long as the King remained in his present state, just as though the King were dead, and the Prince of Wales

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had ascended the throne. This was a tactical blunder, for it paved the way to endless discussion. Pitt immediately pounced on Fox's use of the word "right," and declared it to be a treasonable doctrine (it was certainly a most un-Whiggish one). The Prince had a "claim," he admitted, but no more *right* than any other member of the community. On this point followed impassioned debates. Burke denounced Pitt as "one of the Prince's competitors" for the Regency, and Pitt replied in a "damned passion." Outside the wildest canards flew about, and party feeling ran to its highest pitch. There were rumours of a "Council of Regency," over which, said the Whigs, Pitt would preside, "reigning as King William IV."

After a few days Pitt affected to make a concession. He admitted that the Prince was the most suitable person to be vested with the Regency, subject to certain restrictions. These restrictions, even before they were formulated, were denounced by Fox as an attempt to make the Prince refuse the Regency altogether, by imposing humiliating conditions. Pitt retorted that as the question of "right" had been revived it was necessary to inquire thoroughly into the matter; he appointed a committee, and thus gained another two weeks' delay. As the great Minister knew, time was all important. Willis, his nominee at Kew, had reported privately to him that the King's condition was more favourable, and that there was a prospect that he would before long recover his reason. The Prince, not wishing to be out-generalled, and seeing that the theory of his "right" was being used to play into his enemies' hands, threw over Fox, and despatched the Duke of York to the House of Lords to disclaim it. The Duke did so in an able speech, and he was supported by his uncle, the Duke of Gloucester; but these manœuvres had no effect, for Pitt had already made up his mind on the course to pursue. On December 16 he introduced three resolutions on the subject of the Regency. In the fierce debates that followed, another three weeks of precious time were lost. In the end Pitt's resolutions were carried, and the Ministers set about preparing a Bill. It was understood that the Prince was to be offered the Regency, but with such restrictions as Pitt should be pleased to impose.

The dissensions in the royal family now rivalled those in Parliament. The Queen was wholly on Pitt's side, and ranged

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herself in active opposition to the Prince of Wales, who was supported by his uncles and brothers. It was intimated that the Queen had reconsidered her decision, and was prepared to accept the Regency with Pitt's conditions, if the Prince of Wales refused to accept them. The Prince was hardly allowed to see his father by the Queen, and a bitter dispute arose about the custody of the King's papers and jewels. "She is playing the devil," wrote Sir Gilbert Elliot to his wife, "and has all this time been at the bottom of the cabals and intrigues against the Prince." The Princes resented their mother's attitude. The Prince said, "In this matter her Majesty showed a degree of passion which I have never witnessed or believed to exist in her Majesty before;" while the Duke of York said to her, "I believe, Madam, you are as much deranged as the King." Their attitude was reflected by their friends, who spoke of the Queen with disrespect. For instance, we hear of a supper-party at Mrs. Robert Walpole's, at which were present the Prince of Wales, the Duke of York, Mrs. Fitzherbert, Jack Payne, and others, including oddly enough the Duchess of Gordon, who was an ardent Pittite. Payne, who was in high favour with the Prince, made (no doubt, in his cups) some ribald allusion to the friendship between Pitt and the Queen, at which the Prince laughed boisterously; but the Duchess exclaimed, "You little, insignificant, good-for-nothing upstart, you pert, chattering puppy, how *dare* you name your royal master's royal mother in that style!" [1]

Behind all the disputes about the Regency, never mentioned in official documents or speeches, but lurking in all men's minds, was the question of the Prince's secret marriage to Mrs. Fitzherbert. Fox's denial was now generally discredited, and the country felt itself deceived. The old hatred of Popery existed in the provinces, and it was partly the fear of the Prince's "Papist wife," who had so great an ascendency over him, that inspired the great towns and country districts to pour addresses in upon Pitt at this juncture, assuring him of their support. These proofs of the feeling in the country encouraged the Prime Minister to hamper the Prince's power by every possible re-

[1] "Lady Harcourt's Diary." Locker MSS. in Massey's "History of England."

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striction, and not to make the slightest concession. The nation was at Pitt's back, and was profoundly convinced that the Prince was not fit to exercise the royal power except under stringent restrictions. What those restrictions were soon became apparent. Early in the New Year, 1789, the Prince was offered the Regency, but it was shorn of most of the privileges of sovereignty. The care of the King's person, with the management of the Royal Household, and the appointment of all officers and servants therein, were given to the Queen. The Prince, as Regent, was to have no power to touch the property of the King — that is, Crown property; no power to grant offices or pensions connected therewith, and no power to create peers. Well might the Prince write that these were "restrictions such as no dictator could ever have been bare-faced enough to bring forward." But he did not refuse the Regency, even with these humiliating conditions, for he knew that the Queen would take the office if he did not. When therefore the deputation of both Houses of Parliament waited on him at Carlton House, he said he would accept the Regency, "confident that the limitations on the exercise of the Royal authority deemed necessary for the present have been approved only by the two Houses as a temporary measure."

Then the Regency Bill was introduced into the House of Commons, and the fierce quarrels began all over again. It fell to Burke to lead the Opposition, which he did in a series of impassioned speeches, declaring that the Bill was "not only degrading to the Prince but to the whole House of Brunswick." Fox was absent from these debates on the plea of ill health. There was another reason also. Though Fox was outwardly reconciled to the Prince, the old confidence between them was gone. Fox ascribed this to Mrs. Fitzherbert's influence, and resented it. The Prince considered that Fox had made a grave blunder in tactics when he put forward the claim of *right* on his behalf, and had much mismanaged the whole business in Parliament. But he dared not break with him, though it was even whispered that the Prince was willing to make overtures to Pitt. Lord Buckingham, writing in the autumn to William Grenville on the situation, repeats the rumour on good authority that "the Prince was afraid of Fox, and his opinion of Mr. Pitt was very much altered since the negotiation on the subject of

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his debts, and that he was sure the Prince would in case of any accident send for them both, and endeavour to make his time quiet by employing them jointly, and that this coolness to Fox was much increased by Mrs. Fitzherbert, who never would forgive his public declaration on her subject in the House of Commons, and had taken every opportunity of alienating the Prince's mind from him." [1]

Mrs. Fitzherbert was a factor who could not be ignored in the Prince's secret councils in the matter of the Regency. She took an active part in them, and she won over to her side the Duke of Portland. "The Duke" (of Portland), writes George Selwyn to Lady Carlisle, "now sups every night with his Royal Highness and his brother at Mrs. Fitzherbert's." [2] To these little suppers Fox was not invited. Indeed, he found himself now shut out from the Prince's confidence. If the Prince became Regent, this confidence was absolutely necessary to Fox if he were to form a Government. In this dilemma it is no wonder he sought, by every means in his power, to make his peace with Mrs. Fitzherbert. But she still maintained her hostile attitude. She refused to see him or to speak to him. Sir Philip Francis tells us that she "abhorred Fox, and never would be reconciled to him, notwithstanding many advances and earnest submissions on his part, of which at his request I was more than once a bearer." The quarrel between Mrs. Fitzherbert and Fox was well known, and the most extraordinary rumours flew about concerning the terms he offered her to effect a reconciliation. Lord Harcourt writes to Lady Harcourt: —

"The first news I heard in my morning walk was that Mrs. Fitzherbert is to be created a Duchess. This cannot be true; for how can the Regent make a Peeress, when he is restricted from making any Peers. It appears to me to be an absolute impossibility. Mr. Fox will probably now again come forward on the stage, but he cannot ever be a favourite after what has passed. After resisting every effort that has been made use of to induce him to give up the letter which authorised him to make the famous declaration he made in Parliament two years ago, he says *he has lost it.* This is

[1] Fortescue MSS. Historical MSS. Commission, vol. i.
[2] Carlisle MSS. Historical MSS. Commission, vol. iii.

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not very likely, considering what a very important one it was." [1]

Again the *Morning Herald* writes, December 15, 1788:—

"A very extraordinary circumstance has recently occurred, which will probably be the means of delaying for some time the final and complete arrangement of the intended *blue and buff* administration (the colours of Fox). The impediment originated with Mr. Fox; and were there not more of popular artifice than principle in it, it would be more honourable to his character than perhaps any part of his conduct that had before attracted public notice.

"The memorable declaration of Mr. Fox, in the House of Commons, on the subject of a marriage between a certain Great Character and a Lady well known in the higher circles, cannot but be fresh in the memory of almost every individual in the Kingdom.

"That connexion, on account of the difference in religious principles, appears to Mr. Fox fraught with probable mischief to his measures; he has, therefore, declared his positive resolution not to take any part in the intended new Ministry, until the exact limits of that connexion are satisfactorily defined, as he has now reason to believe that it is of a more *coercive and permanent* nature than he was once induced to imagine and announce.

"To annul the grounds of Mr. Fox's objection, no less a sum than the annual allowance of £20,000 has been offered to the lady, on condition of her retiring to the Continent. This the lady has positively refused; expressing her firm determination to abide by an authority she is said to hold forth as unanswerable and unalienable.

"A Character (the Duke of York), who has lately started forth into oratorical consequence, is the negotiator in this important business, who, finding the lady obstinate, has offered, in addition to the enormous income above mentioned, the rank of an English Duchess!

[1] "Harcourt Papers." The letter was not lost. It must have been the letter which the Prince of Wales wrote in answer to Fox, December 11, 1785, before his marriage to Mrs. Fitzherbert. It was found among Fox's papers after his death, tied up with his letter to the Prince on the subject. Probably Fox did not think it sufficiently strong to justify his categorical statement in the House of Commons; perhaps he did not care to betray the Prince's confidence.

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"The lady, however, firmly resists all these alluring temptations, urging that she was in circumstances entirely independent previously to her being induced to coincide with that condition from which she is resolute not to recede, as character is of much greater importance to her than affluence, however abundant, if attended with the deprivation of that rank to which *she holds herself entitled.*"

This article in the *Morning Herald*, which created a sensation at the moment, was, no doubt, ill-informed and exaggerated. It probably arose from something that Mrs. Fitzherbert had said about Fox, for she made no attempt to conceal her antipathy, and freely and often expressed it. Fox would have liked to break off the connection between the Prince and Mrs. Fitzherbert altogether, but he recognised that such an attempt at this juncture was foredoomed to failure, and did not attempt it. The statement, therefore, that he offered her £20,000 a year to go into exile in the event of the Prince becoming Regent and he Prime Minister, may be dismissed as absurd. Fox knew her too well to make such an offer, but he recognised the extent of her influence over the Prince, and perhaps he felt that he owed her some reparation for the wrong he had done her, in part, unconsciously; but whether he had believed what he said in the House of Commons or not, there was no need for him to have used such coarse terms. The statement that he offered her the rank of a duchess in the event of his forming a Government is in part borne out by Lord Stourton, who in his loosely-worded narrative writes, "She went so far with respect to Mr. Fox that when afterwards, during his Administration,[1] he made some overtures to recover her good will, she refused, though the attainment of the rank of Duchess was to be the fruit of their reconciliation. In naming this circumstance to me she observed that she did not wish to be another Duchess of Kendal."

This observation of Mrs. Fitzherbert throws a light on her refusal to be created a Duchess then, and also many years later, when a similar offer was made her by William IV. The Duchess of Kendal was the acknowledged mistress of George I., and it was because she was his mistress that she was elevated

[1] This must either mean Fox's contemplated Administration in 1789, in the event of the Prince of Wales becoming Regent — which came to nothing — or when he became Foreign Secretary in Lord Grenville's Administration in 1806.

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MRS. FITZHERBERT

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to the rank of a duchess. There was no question of marriage between them. The German Pastor of the Lutheran Chapel Royal refused her the Sacrament because, in his view, she was living "in open sin." Mrs. Fitzherbert, on the contrary, had been married to the Prince, and her Church regarded her as his wife. She was admitted to the Sacraments of her Church, which would not have been the case had she been his mistress. Her marriage, not merely the legality of it (she never claimed that it was *legal*), but the fact *in toto*, had been denied by Fox with gross comments, she had been publicly shamed, and she held that the stain could not be wiped away short of an equally public apology and recantation. But when Fox (conditionally, of course) offered her, instead, the rank of duchess, she spurned it.

Mrs. Fitzherbert preferred to trust to the Prince, who had sworn to make her all possible amends for the public denial of their marriage the moment he had the power. It looked now, with the Regency almost within his grasp, that the power would come. But distrusting Fox as she did, Mrs. Fitzherbert was profoundly agitated by these rumours in the press and elsewhere. She feared that they masked some secret design against her. She sought the Prince and demanded an explanation. The Prince freely denied all knowledge of them, renewed his vows and entreaties, and succeeded in pacifying her, as he had often done before. But with Fox she would hold no sort of communication; and he, sick in mind and body, smarting under the chagrin and disappointment caused by his own tactical blunder in the House, Mrs. Fitzherbert's rebuff and the Prince's coldness, went down to the country, and on the plea of illness absented himself from the House of Commons during the remaining debates on the Regency Bill. He was ill, undoubtedly, but that was not the only reason of his continued absence. Jealousies were rife among the Prince's friends. Sheridan stood high in the Prince's favour and in that of Mrs. Fitzherbert. "Charles Fox," writes one, "besides ill-health, is plagued to death all day long, dissatisfied with Sheridan's supremacy, and not choosing to be questioned by Mr. Rolle, who vows he will, in spite of threats and opposition, *approfondir* that matter" [*i.e.*, the marriage of Mrs. Fitzherbert].[1]

[1] "Courts and Cabinets of George III." By the Duke of Buckingham, 1853

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The irrepressible Rolle, who had never believed Fox's denial at the time, and who was now convinced by the growing power and influence of Mrs. Fitzherbert, and the confident assertions of her friends, that he had been tricked, was determined to get to the truth. He had announced that he would raise the question again during the debates on the Regency Bill, and he intended to address his questions to Fox himself. This Fox was determined he should not do, and so he stayed away from the House altogether.

The Prince's party were in a great fright at the prospect of his marriage with Mrs. Fitzherbert being raised at such an inconvenient time, and did all in their power to discount it in advance. Lord Harcourt writes to Lady Harcourt:[1] "I find it is a measure of the party to say that the Prince, from his amiable character, retains a *friendship* for Mrs. Fitzherbert; but that she has not the least remaining influence; that he is quite tired of her, and in love elsewhere, therefore the public need have no further alarm on her account." And again: "The report of H.R.H. being tired of Mrs. Fitzherbert gains ground. The old Duchess of Bedford said at a party she had the other day, that she knew he could not stand the unpopularity occasioned by his connection with a Catholic, and that he entreated her to go to France or anywhere abroad and he would give her £10,000 per annum. She, however, refused, saying she would take her chance in England. . . . I doubt the truth of this story."

These manœuvres were unsuccessful in averting a discussion in Parliament.[2] Rolle's opportunity came on February 7, 1789. The Regency Bill was in Committee, and was being discussed in a full House. Presently the House came to the following clause: —

"Provided also, and be it enacted by the authority aforesaid, that if his said Royal Highness George Augustus Frederick, Prince of Wales, shall not continue to be resident in Great Britain, *or shall at any time marry a Papist;* then, and in every case, all the powers and authorities vested in his said Royal Highness, by virtue of the Act, shall cease and determine."

To this Rolle moved an amendment, to insert after the words *or shall at any time marry a Papist* the following: *or shall*

[1] "Harcourt Papers."
[2] Parliamentary History, vol. xxvii. Debate on the Regency Bill, 1789.

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at any time be proved to be married, in fact, or in law, to a Papist.

In introducing his amendment *Mr. Rolle* said: "That he meant nothing personal or disrespectful, nothing injurious or hateful to the feelings of any individual. He spoke from the regard he had to the principles of the Constitution which were the bulwarks of our freedom, and out of veneration for the House of Brunswick, and the wish to secure the Protestant succession in that House, because that succession would secure our liberties. . . . Could he have brought himself to believe that, as the clause stood at present, it was sufficiently strong, he would not have proposed the amendment; or if any person would step forward and confirm the declaration solemnly made by a right honourable gentleman (Mr. Fox) in that House two years ago, he should be satisfied. That declaration had satisfied him at the time, nor did he mean to impeach its credibility, but as doubts and scruples had nevertheless been still entertained without doors, he wished them to be effectually silenced, and that the question might be set at rest for ever."

Lord Belgrave, who followed, blamed Rolle for casting doubts on Fox's declaration that there was no truth in the report that "an indissoluble union had taken place with a very amiable and respectable Character, whose religious opinions differed from the religious opinions of the Established Church of this country." He contended that there was no occasion to discuss the validity of such a rumour over again.

Mr. Pitt, on behalf of the Government, said that he could not accept the amendment, as the Uniformity Clause was the same as he had found in former Regency Bills, and he judged it sufficient security. He did not wish to advert to anything that had formerly passed in the House.

The Attorney-General also considered the clause, as it stood, a sufficient legal security: it had sufficed for our ancestors. The House could not legislate on rumours, and "with regard to the particular rumour in question he knew of nothing that could warrant him to believe it to have any foundation."

For the information of the Committee the clause of the Royal Marriage Act (12 George III.) was read. The Clause provides that, previous to the marriage of the descendants of George II. taking place *lawfully*, His Majesty's (George III.'s)

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consent to such a marriage must be obtained, and signified under his own sign manual, which consent must have the sanction of the Great Seal, and that all marriages contracted without the Royal consent being so formally signified, were declared to be ***null and void***, and of no effect whatever.

Mr. Rolle said he had heard it to be the opinion of some of the first lawyers of this country that nothing contained in the Act just referred to altered or affected the clause in the Act of William and Mary which enacted that any heir to the Crown who married a Papist forfeited his right to the Crown.

It was now the turn of "the Prince's friends." *Lord North* said that by perusing the Act which had just been read (the Royal Marriage Act) it would appear that no marriage could be contracted of the kind, respecting which they appeared to have such wonderful apprehensions, and therefore no danger could arise to Church and State in the manner dreaded. . . . The Act was in full force, and so it would remain unless regularly repealed by some subsequent statute. He questioned the motives of Mr. Rolle in agitating this question, which "could answer no wholesome purpose whatsoever."

This brought up *Mr. Pitt*, who severely rebuked Lord North for questioning the motives of his hon. friend Mr. Rolle, and "for the levity with which he treated so serious a subject." At the same time he repeated that he considered the amendment unnecessary.

Lord North would not accept the reprimand, and he declared that "the blame rested on Mr. Rolle for advancing the dangerous doctrine of questioning the validity of an Act of Parliament regularly passed under all its forms by the three branches of the legislature."

Mr. Sheridan also assailed the motives of Mr. Rolle in continuing to agitate this question. "The hon. gentleman says he has his doubts, he does not state why. He has had Acts of Parliament consulted tending darkly to sustain those doubts. What motive *can* he have but to give suspicion wing and disseminate alarm? Who has said anything in favour of those doubts? It is true a pamphlet [1] has been written by an ingen-

[1] The allusion was to Horne Tooke's pamphlet, already quoted: "A Letter to a Friend on the Reported Marriage of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales."

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ious gentleman (Mr. Horne Tooke), the madness and folly of which are apparent on every page, and the whole drift of which betrays the author to be a bad citizen, because when he roundly asserts that he seriously believes the fact he alludes to, to have taken place, and then resorts to no means of elucidating it, he insinuates what he ought *not* to have insinuated, without proceeding to establish it by something at least that bore the resemblance of truth."

Mr. Grey said that the only merited answer to the hon. gentleman (Mr. Rolle) was the short answer of the Act of Parliament which had been read. Whether the hon. gentleman's motives were good or bad, he should leave others to determine; but he did suspect they were not good, because they tended to involve the country in disunion, alarm, and distrust. He reprobated the rumours alluded to as false, libellous, and calumniatory,[1] tending to create in the minds of the public, at a most critical moment, suspicions equally derogatory to the Prince of Wales and dangerous to the general welfare of the public.

Mr. Dundas[2] (Treasurer of the Navy) said: "When he heard that a recent Act of Parliament was the only reply fit to be given to questions of the deepest importance, he could not admit that a matter of such magnitude should rest on such a point, nor would he agree that the effect of the Act of Settlement was virtually done away by a posterior Act, which did not specifically repeat the clause in a Statute, in which the constitution and the country were so deeply interested, as the Act of William and Mary. As little was he willing to submit that the rumour alluded to was a question rather to be laughed at than argued. So to say was surely paying a bad compliment to the Prince of Wales, and resting his cause on a weak and loose foundation. He was ready to say that he disbelieved the rumour for other and he conceived better

[1] Grey in private life was a man of high honour, yet he must have known that he was deliberately uttering a falsehood, for by his own statement he was one of those to whom the Prince had admitted the fact of his marriage, when he wished that Fox's denial should be softened in the House of Commons. Grey had refused to do this, and Sheridan had undertaken it; but that does not excuse Grey's conduct on this occasion in deliberately misleading the House of Commons.

[2] Henry Dundas, first Viscount Melville (1742–1811).

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reasons.[1] He lamented a thousand, and a thousand, times the absence of the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Fox) who had made that declaration two sessions ago which had decided his (Mr. Dundas's) opinion at the time, and had since continued to preserve it fixed and unmoved; more especially did he regret the *cause* of his absence (illness). He wished for the right hon. gentleman's presence because he entertained so high an opinion of his sincerity that he was confident he would have come down to the House *at the risk of his life* to have stated his sentiments on the motion of the hon. gentleman (Mr. Rolle) if any point had occurred to have induced him to alter the opinion he had entertained, when the subject had been brought under discussion on a former occasion. On that opinion, solemnly delivered as it had been in that House, he perfectly relied, and therefore he was ready to say he did not give the *smallest* credit to the rumour which had been so often referred to in the course of debate. The hon. gentleman on the other side (Mr. Grey) seemed anxious to provoke a discussion on the whole subject; he for one should feel no delicacy in the world, but for a single consideration, and that was because two Persons must necessarily be made the objects of the discussion. With regard to one of the high and respectable Personages alluded to (the Prince of Wales) he certainly should feel but little difficulty, although no man felt more respect for that Exalted Personage than himself; but with regard to the other amiable Character (Mrs. Fitzherbert) he confessed that when the Sex came into question in that House, he knew not how to agitate a subject of such delicacy. He therefore wished, at all times, to shut the door upon such discussions." Mr. Dundas then rebuked Mr. Grey for impugning the motives of Mr. Rolle, "and concluded by hinting to Mr. Grey that it would have shown more prudence, and have better served the cause on the behalf of which he had exercised his zeal, if he had restrained that zeal, and taken no part in the debate of the day."

This taunt brought up Grey again, who said, "That so far from feeling regret for the manner in which he had delivered his sentiments, he was happy at having delivered his opinion, since

[1] Dundas's speech was really an elaborate sarcasm: he wished to fix the responsibility for the denial of the marriage on Fox and the Prince's friends, and he knew perfectly well that Fox wished to avoid Rolle.

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it had drawn from the two right hon. gentlemen (Mr. Pitt and Mr. Dundas) express declarations that they neither of them believed the reports so often alluded to in the course of the debate. He repeated his reprobation of those reports as false, libellous, and calumnious." With reference to the absence of Mr. Fox, he assured the Committee "that it was due to the character of his right hon. friend to declare that no consideration of health, or any other circumstance, would have prevented his attendance in his place if he had not, at the moment, been fully satisfied that what he had asserted on a former occasion was *strictly true*. Had the case been otherwire, his right hon. friend would have been present *even at the risk of his life*."

The amendment was then negatived, without a division, and the House proceeded to debate the clause which restrained the Prince Regent from creating peers.

Thus for the second time was Mrs. Fitzherbert's marriage publicly denied in Parliament, and on this occasion by men like Grey and Sheridan, who, if they did not know the full facts of the case, knew for certain that a ceremony of marriage had taken place. Well might the unhappy woman exclaim, "Save me from my friends!" She was doubly forsworn.

It is unnecessary to follow the debates on the Regency Bill. They continued to be marked by the greatest passion and prejudice on both sides. Burke, who led the opposition, excelled himself in invective. Fox sulked in retirement. The excitement was equally great outside the walls of Parliament. The fashionable world of London was divided into two hostile factions. The Duchess of Devonshire gave parties on the Whig side, and the Duchess of Gordon on the Tory; the ladies being even more excited than the men. At balls and parties given by the Prince's friends, the ladies appeared wearing "Regency caps," while at the Tory houses the ladies adorned themselves with ribbons inscribed, "God save the King." These were wound round their arms or entwined in their hair. Mrs. Fitzherbert threw herself into the fray *con amore*, and worked early and late for the Prince. Her house was used as a meeting-place for his friends; she encouraged the wavering and cajoled the doubtful. Her future destiny at this time was an object of general curiosity. In the event of the Regency what would she become? There seemed no limit to her possibilities, and

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she was generally regarded as the leader of the family struggle on the one side, and the Queen the leader on the other. The struggle for the Regency is the only instance of Mrs. Fitzherbert's direct interference in politics, though this was a personal matter rather than a political one with her. There were those who held that her advocacy did more harm than good.

Among the Prince's own followers the near prospect of place and power had a demoralising effect. There were many jealousies and intrigues. The Prince entertained his friends sumptuously every day, and was lavish in his promises. His uncle the Duke of Cumberland was promised the Garter, until now refused him by the King; his brother the Duke of York was to become Commander-in-Chief, Fox was to be Prime Minister, Sheridan Treasurer for the Navy, and so on. All the smaller fry of place-hunters and parasites, such as Jack Payne, were to be provided for in some way or other. This hungry crew was keenly affected by the restriction which gave to the Queen the household appointments, for no less than one hundred and fifty places were thus lost to them. But this restriction was regarded as only temporary.

Thus did the Prince and his friends occupy themselves until the middle of February 1789. It was hoped that the Prince would be in possession of the Regency by the 14th February. Alas for the mutability of human hopes! Just at the moment, when power and place seemed at last within their grasp, rumours came that the King was recovering his reason. These rumours gained in strength day by day. On the 19th February, when the Regency Bill was under discussion in the Lords, the Lord Chancellor stood up and said it would be "indecent," in the improved state of the King's health, to proceed further with the measure, and the House adjourned for a week. By that time the King was so much better that the bulletins were discontinued. On February 27, the Prince received an address from the Irish Parliament, who prayed him to take the Regency of Ireland without any restrictions. Though bitterness and disappointment must have been in his heart, the Prince received the deputation with great *aplomb*, and entertained them after at a magnificent banquet, and in his speech spoke of "the happy event of the King's recovery."

On the very day the Regency Bill was to have been passed

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into law the Prince of Wales and the Duke of York were summoned down to Kew, and had the felicity of being received by the King, and allowed to offer him congratulations on his recovery. The King now grew better daily, and on April 23, his recovery being considered complete, he attended St. Paul's in state, accompanied by all his family, and returned thanks to Almighty God for the mercies vouchsafed to him.

Thus vanished the Prince's hopes of the Regency; thus went also Mrs. Fitzherbert's dream of a public reparation, for when the Regency question was revived twenty years later, her position with regard to the Prince of Wales was altogether different. Public feeling found expression in the inevitable cartoons. On April 29 appeared one entitled, "The Funeral Procession of Miss Regency." On the coffin rest a Prince's coronet, a dice-box, and an empty purse. Mrs. Fitzherbert acts as Chief Mourner, overcome with grief at the loss of her prospects. Fox and Sheridan follow, and several members of the Prince's household act as mutes, including Weltje, who sings —

"Vor by Got ve do pine, and in sadness ve tink
Dat it's long till de Prince vear de Crown."

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CHAPTER XIV

FAMILY QUARRELS

(1789–1791)

THE quarrel between Queen Charlotte and the Prince of Wales did not end with the King's recovery; it was prolonged for more than a year. In this family dispute the Queen does not appear in an amiable light. She inflamed the King's mind against the Prince of Wales and the Duke of York, with stories of their misconduct during the struggle for the Regency. She put the worst construction on their actions and motives, and did all in her power to prevent them from having free access to their father. Scenes were frequent between the Queen and her sons. "The Prince of Wales," writes Sir George Elliot soon after the King's recovery, "has had a smart tussle with the Queen, in which they came to strong and open declarations of hostility. He told her that she had connected herself with his enemies, and had entered into plans for destroying and disgracing him and all her children, and that she had countenanced misrepresentations of his conduct to the King and prevented the explanations which he wished to give. She was violent and lost her temper." [1]

A *fête* to celebrate the King's recovery was given at Windsor, and by the Queen's arrangement it was converted into a party demonstration. All the ladies of the Court wore Garter blue, the Tory colour, and political allusions were frequent in the musical part of the programme; even the sweetmeats at supper were adorned with political mottoes and devices.

The Prince of Wales and his brothers were present, not choosing to be absent, though the Queen had given them a strong hint to keep away. She told the Duke of York beforehand that the party was given only for the "Ministers and those

[1] "Sir G. Elliot's Life and Letters."

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GEORGE III.

QUEEN CHARLOTTE

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persons in Parliament who have voted for the King and *me*." The King was courteous to his sons, but the Queen was very "sour and glum" because the King spoke to them at all. The Princes seem to have vented their ill-humour on the unoffending Princesses, their sisters, so altogether it cannot have been a pleasant party.

The dispute between the Queen and her sons went from bad to worse, until at last it culminated in a duel fought between the representatives of the contending factions; the Duke of York representing the Prince of Wales's side, and Colonel Lenox figuring as the champion of the Queen and the Court. Lenox's mother held a place in the Queen's household, and he himself was in high favour with Her Majesty. He had gone about everywhere publicly abusing the Prince of Wales and the Duke of York. Of course his remarks were repeated to the royal brothers, and they resented them, for they knew by whom they were inspired. A quarrel was picked on some trifling pretext, and Lenox sent a challenge to the Duke of York, who accepted it. The duel was fought on Wimbledon Common; Lenox's second was a lord of the King's bedchamber. Lenox fired and the ball grazed the Duke's ear; the Duke did not fire, and as he refused to do so the duel came to an ignominious end. The Prince of Wales went down to Windsor after the duel, determined to tell the King the whole affair, but the Queen took care that he should not see him alone. The King, who had heard nothing about the duel, was greatly agitated at the danger to which his favourite son had been exposed, but the Queen, who was present all the time, heard the Prince's story unmoved, and her only comment at the end, was to say that it was "all the Duke of York's own fault." When, a few days later, the Duke came to see his father, she made not the slightest allusion to the duel. Her sympathies were, of course, with her self-constituted champion; a few weeks later she marked this publicly at the King's birthday ball at St. James's. Colonel Lenox was invited at the Queen's instance, and danced in the same country dance as the royal brothers. The Prince of Wales, when he saw him, stopped dancing abruptly, and led his partner out of the dance. The Queen asked the Prince, "Was he tired?" and on his answering in the negative, she supposed he "thought it too hot." The Prince retorted angrily

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that "in such company it was impossible not to find it too hot." The Queen then, no doubt fearing a scene, gave the signal for retiring, and broke up the ball.

The King was not present. He was still an invalid. Had he been in his usual health none of these scenes would have happened, but for many months after his so-called recovery, though pronounced to be sane by his physicians, he was weak and feeble, both in mind and body, and did everything under the influence, or the compulsion, of the Queen. The Queen guarded him jealously from any outside interference; she put herself at the head of a faction, and deliberately sought to place the Prince of Wales's conduct in the worst light. Her motive was obvious; she knew, none better, the precarious state of the King's health. It was thought probable that he would have a relapse, and the Queen was determined not to make the same mistake she had made in the last crisis, in not at once securing all the power at her command.

Her conduct was not allowed to pass without protest. The Prince of Wales addressed endless remonstrances to the King, excusing himself, and complaining bitterly of his mother. All these letters the King either ignored, or he replied through the Queen that he "proposed avoiding all discussions that may in their nature agitate him." The victory of the Queen was complete.

All this had the worst possible effect on the Prince of Wales. The disappointment of the Regency had been a heavy blow to him, and followed as it was by the boycott of the Court, it drove him into a state, first of anger, and then of indifference. His father would not listen to him, his mother intrigued against him, whatever he did was wrong, and if he did nothing that was wrong also. Every shred of power was jealously kept from him, every opportunity of public usefulness was denied to him. The position of heir-apparent is always a difficult one; it was never more difficult than in the case of George, Prince of Wales. Nearly every legitimate outlet for his abilities was refused him, and he was driven back upon himself, and forced to dissipate his energies upon a barren round of pleasure. Of a naturally sanguine temperament, this attitude of distrust and hatred on the part of his parents chilled and depressed him. His was a nature which needed appreciation and encouragement.

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It has been the fashion to represent the life of the Prince of Wales (afterwards George IV.), from his earliest years until his death, as one long round of self-indulgence and pleasure, with no attempt on his part of reformation, or of striving for higher things; yet of his early manhood, at least, this view is a false and malicious one. For four years, from the period of his marriage to Mrs. Fitzherbert until the disappointment of the Regency, the Prince had honestly striven to render himself worthier of the high position to which he was called. He had retrenched his expenditure, he had striven to pay his debts, he had reformed his manner of living, he drank less, gambled less. He was less wild in his conduct, less free in his conversation, and he had avoided the wildest of his companions. There were occasional lapses, but for four years he made great efforts to reform. That much of this was due to the good influence of Mrs. Fitzherbert, is of course true; much also was due to himself, for his temptations were infinitely greater than those who so readily condemn him can have any idea. It is probable that, had the Regency been given him at this period of his life, he might, with his undoubted abilities, have done something worthy of his name, but just when the power was within his grasp it was snatched from him. This disappointment, followed as it was by the triumph of his enemies and the hatred of the court, embittered and discouraged him. He was once more reduced to a condition of impotence, and driven back upon himself. Is it any wonder, under the circumstances, that a man of his inherited temperament should in disgust yield to the overwhelming temptations that surrounded him on every side? It was all so fatally easy. Mrs. Fitzherbert still tried her best to moderate his tendencies, but the satyr voices called so loudly to him, that even she pleaded to deaf ears. He was still devoted to her, but not enough to make him break from his pleasures. Perhaps she too was discouraged and disappointed at the unexpected turn of events, and lost for the time something of her belief in herself, and in her power to lead the Prince.

The summer of 1790 found the Prince and Mrs. Fitzherbert again at Brighton, which under the Prince's influence became transformed into a veritable city of pleasure. This year life at Brighton was merrier than ever. The Prince strove to forget

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his disappointment; he let himself go, and was surrounded by all the wildest spirits among his friends. From morning till night nothing was thought of but pleasure, and pleasure of the most reckless kind.

Among his chosen friends were the notorious Barrymore family, a merry, reckless crew. Of these the eldest was Richard Barry, seventh Lord Barrymore, who had not long come of age, and was in the enjoyment of £20,000 a year, a fortune which he was rapidly dissipating. This young rake-hell was a boon companion of the Prince, and he was an extraordinary combination of the most opposite qualities. "His Lordship," we are told, "alternated between a gentleman and a blackguard; the refined wit and the most vulgar bully, he was equally well known in St. Giles's or St. James's. He could fence, dance, drive, or drink, box or bet, with any man in the kingdom. He could discourse slang as trippingly as French, relish porter after port, and compliment her ladyship at a ball with as much ease and brilliance as he could bespatter blood in a cider cellar." [1] He was generous to prodigality, and always independent of prejudice; notwithstanding his wit he was so foul-mouthed that he gained the nickname of "Hellgate." He died in 1793, three years after the date of which we write, at the early age of twenty-four, and was succeeded by his brother, Henry Barry, who, being lame, was known as "Cripplegate." He, though as vicious as his brother, had neither his parts nor his *bonhomie*. To him belongs the honour of having invented the "Tiger" or smart juvenile groom. There was another brother, Augustus Barry, in holy orders of the Church of Ireland, a most inveterate gambler, always in debt and in danger of the sponging-house, who on this account was dubbed "Newgate." "Neither the Church nor the nobility derived much advantage from his being a member," says one of his contemporaries, and we can well believe it. He too was a combination of the polished gentleman and the perfect blackguard. To this worthy trio of brothers was added a sister (afterwards Lady Melfort) who from the shrewishness of her temper, and the violence of her language, was nicknamed "Billingsgate." The Barrymores, despite their vices and follies, were the most capital company.

[1] "Reminiscences of Henry Angelo." London, 1830.

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They said whatever came into their mind, their wit was always ready, and their spirits never flagged.

The merry recklessness of the Irish temperament had a great attraction for the Prince of Wales, and indeed bore a peculiar affinity to his own character. It must be remembered that he was still a young man, not yet thirty, full of spirits, and the charm of youth. Besides the Barrymores, Sheridan and Burke were Irishmen. So was Colonel George Hanger (afterwards Lord Coleraine), an eccentric character, who for years was the almost inseparable companion of the Prince of Wales. He had entered a Hessian regiment, and served in his corps throughout the war in America. When he came back to London he attached himself to the Prince, who had then just come upon the town, and was given an appointment as equerry. He figured in many of Gillray's cartoons; his eccentricity was marked in his fantastic dress and free manners, and it showed itself in later life, when he became Lord Coleraine, by refusing to acknowledge his title, and considering himself insulted if addressed by it. Like many of the Prince's friends he had a strain of ability; he dabbled in literature, and was said to be the author of the ballad, "Kitty of Coleraine." We must also not forget Felix McCarthy, one of Lord Barrymore's gang of "bruisers" who followed him to Brighton. McCarthy was a handsome, impecunious young Irishman of gentle birth, known as the "Irish Giant," a favourite with the Prince, who often helped him, for he was in chronic difficulties about money. To these must be added Mrs. Fitzherbert's brothers, Jack and Watt Smythe, who also had a strain of Irish blood in their veins. They were at this time constant companions of the Prince, and ready to do anything for him. These youths quite lost their heads in the company where they now found themselves. They were wild, and always in want of money, yet it is characteristic of Mrs. Fitzherbert that she consistently refused to use her influence with the Prince to procure any place or sinecure for her brothers. She preferred to help them out of her own pocket, a privilege of which they liberally availed themselves.

Most of these men could plead youth as an excuse for their excesses and extravagances, and their follies were redeemed by many good qualities. This cannot be said of all the Prince's

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friends, for some of them were wholly vicious. Among these was the Duke of Norfolk, "Jockey of Norfolk," a notorious drunkard and glutton, who often posted over from Arundel to Brighton, and stayed a few days, as the Prince's guest at the Pavilion. Another frequent visitor was the last Duke of Queensberry, familiarly known as "Old Q.," one of the wickedest of wicked old men, who in his youth had been a member of the "Hell Fire Club," and in his old age cared for nothing in heaven or on earth. Of him it was written:—

> "And there, insatiate yet with folly's sport,
> That polished, sin-worn fragment of the Court,
> The shade of Queensb'ry should with Clermont meet
> Ogling and hobbling down St. James's Street."

Another *habitué* was Sir John Lade, the celebrated Whip, who had taught the Prince driving, besides many other things that he ought not to have taught him. He was the king of the stables, and the familiar friend of grooms, jockeys, and touts. His wife was the Amazonain Letitia, who created a sensation by riding astride on horseback; she looked like Diana, and she drove a curricle and four with supreme skill, handling the reins even better than her husband. Her origin was of the lowest. Rumours said that she had lived in St. Giles's as the mistress of "Sixteen-String Jack," a highwayman who was hanged in 1774. She then married Sir John Lade, who had a place in Sussex, and thus came to Brighton. The Prince, who loved horses and everything to do with them, found the Lades congenial spirits. We must not forget to mention also the Duke of Orleans, who was often at Brighton during his frequent visits to England. He professed Liberal principles, and was known as Monsieur l'Egalité, but he was really a man of no principles at all; his public morality was on a par with his private conduct. He was a familiar figure on the Steine, and generally appeared in a bottle-green coat, which contrasted violently with his inflamed and scorbutic countenance.

It was a gay summer at Brighton; the Prince kept his birthday there with great festivities. Oxen were roasted whole, and the town was illuminated. No compliments passed between the King and his son on this occasion, though the Court was sojourning at Weymouth for the benefit of the King's health.

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The Prince of Wales sent the Duke of York to see his father, but he would not go himself, or interrupt for one day his round of pleasure at Brighton. Many families of distinction had come to sojourn there, and lovely ladies of noble birth lent a grace to the Prince's parties. Among them was the witty and fascinating Lady Clare, an Irish lady who was a great friend of Mrs. Fitzherbert, and the stately though gay Mary Isabella, Duchess of Rutland, now a widow, and many more.

The Prince went to Lewes Races this year in semi-state, and was received by the high sheriff of the county, attended by a company of javelin men. Mrs. Fitzherbert, the Duchess of Rutland, and Lady Lade, also drove to the races, each in a separate carriage, and each drawn by four grey ponies. Lady Lade, one would think, was hardly fit company for the other ladies, but the Prince's set was nothing if not "mixed." There were theatrical performances at the Old Theatre in Duke Street, one being given, "by desire of Mrs. Fitzherbert," by amateurs, "for the benefit of those persons who had failed in former attempts." The piece performed was the *Tragedy of the Orphan*. The audience was in shouts of laughter throughout the performance, and the Prince, we are told, laughed so much that he "nearly cracked his sides."

Besides races and theatrical parties there were cricket matches in the Pavilion grounds, fencing matches, "pugilistic encounters," dinner parties at the Pavilion every night, and concerts and dances every week. Everything went as merry as a marriage bell, but the harmony was sometimes marred by quarrels among the Prince's friends, which not infrequently ended in a little blood-letting. Hard drinking and high play were responsible for many of these quarrels, and practical jokes for some of them. It was an age of practical jokes; the Prince delighted in them, and the Barrymore family were especially given to pranks of this kind. For instance, a favourite pastime of Lord Barrymore and his brothers was, as they were posting in their coach down the road from London to Brighton, to imitate the screams of a woman, and cry out. "Murder, rape! Unhand me, villain! Let me go!" &c. Chivalrous passers-by would sometimes start in pursuit of the coach and stop it by force, only to find that it contained no fair lady in distress, but instead Lord Barrymore and his musuclar "bruisers," who would jump

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out and administer a sound thrashing to the would-be rescuers. The changing of signposts and the fighting of waggoners on the road were common incidents on these journeys. One summer at Brighton, Lord Barrymore and his brothers after dark went about with a coffin. They called themselves "the Merry Mourners," and knocked at the doors of peaceable townsmen, frightening women and children. Nor were even the Prince and Mrs. Fitzherbert exempt from these practical jokes. On one occasion, Lord Barrymore's brother, "Cripplegate," rode a horse up the stairs of Mrs. Fitzherbert's house — right up to the garrets. But the horse could not be persuaded to go downstairs again, and had at last to be pulled down by main force by two blacksmiths. Henry Angelo, the fencing-master and actor, relates another anecdote: — "The year after I played 'Mother Cole' at Brighton, I received an invitation from Lord Barrymore to his house, then upon the Steine. One night, when the champagne prevented the evening finishing tranquilly, Lord Barrymore proposed, as there was a guitar in the house, that I should play on it. I was to be the musician, and he dressed in the cookmaid's clothes, and so to sing *Machère Amie*. Accordingly, taking me to another part of the Steine, under Mrs. Fitzherbert's window (it was then three o'clock), he sang, while I played the accompaniment. The next day he told me (quizzing, I should think) that the Prince said, 'Barrymore, you may make yourself a fool as much as you please; but if I had known it was Angelo I would have whipped him into the sea.'" [1]

In those days Mrs. Fitzherbert was merry too, but many of these wild doings were far from her liking. In vain would she plead for moderation. She found herself powerless to do much. The Prince, in the morning, when he was in a penitent mood, would promise her anything and everything, but in the evening the same revels would take place, and with the same results. Thomas Raikes writes in his "Journal": —

"Few were the happy hours that she could number even at that period. He [the Prince] was young and impetuous and boisterous in his character, and very much addicted to the pleasures of the table. It was the fashion in those days to

[1] "Reminiscences of Henry Angelo." London, 1830.

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drink very hard, and Mrs. Fitzherbert never retired to rest until her Royal spouse came home. But I have heard the late Duke of York say, that, often when she heard the Prince and his drunken companions on the staircase, she would seek a refuge from their presence even under the sofa when the Prince, finding the drawing-room deserted, would draw his sword in joke, and searching about the room would at last draw forth the trembling victim from her place of concealment." [1]

Apart from the Prince's extravagances, Mrs. Fitzherbert had troubles and anxieties of her own. Some of them she had brought upon herself. The way in which she had departed from her usual wise neutrality, and had thrown herself into the struggle for the Regency, had aroused feelings of resentment against her both at court and in the Government. The victorious party determined to make her feel the weight of their displeasure. Nothing was done directly, but endless intrigues were set afoot to separate her from the Prince, and to frighten her into leaving the country. Rumours reached her that she would be prosecuted for violating the Royal Marriage Act, and the penalties of *premunire* would be directed against her. She was also threatened with imprisonment for debt, and this threat was nearly being put into force, for the Prince, through his gambling habits, was again heavily embarrassed, and even in sore straits for ready money. Mrs. Fitzherbert shared his difficulties, for she had thrown her jointure into the common stock, and the Prince's allowance to her was irregularly paid. To do him justice the Prince always came to her aid, and raised the money somehow; but latterly, in some unaccountable way, his customary resources in time of need were closed to him. One morning in London, when he was at his wits' end for want of money, a bailiff arrived at Mrs. Fitzherbert's house in Pall Mall and served a writ on her for a debt of £1835. The Prince of Wales was in the house at the time. The debt had not long been owing, but the writ was returnable on the morrow; therefore, if the money were not paid within a few hours, the lady would have to be conveyed to prison. The Prince lost not a moment in applying to his usual money-lenders; not one of them would help him. It was evidently a

[1] "Journal of Thomas Raikes." London, 1857.

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trap. Mrs. Fitzherbert, whose house was already occupied by the sheriff's officers, sent to a well-known pawnbroker, and tried to raise money on her plate and jewels, but here again there was a difficulty, for the bailiffs refused to let the articles go out of the house. At last the Prince sent for his own jewels from Carlton House, which were duly pledged, and with the money thus raised the debt was paid off, and Mrs. Fitzherbert was spared further indignity.[1] The jewels were redeemed the following day, for the Prince meanwhile raised some money from a Jew in St. Mary Axe.

Nor was this all. A section of the press was suborned against her, and simultaneously there appeared in many papers articles and paragraphs detrimental to her character, and teeming with abuse, evidently inspired by her enemies. As a rule Mrs. Fitzherbert always ignored these attacks, but one pamphlet in particular was so scurrilious, and so categorical in its statements, that proceedings were taken against the writer for libel, with the result that he was sentenced to pay a fine of £50, a year's imprisonment in Newgate, and to give security for his good behaviour for five years. After this the attacks upon her ceased for a time.

Thus matters went on for two years, 1789–1790; the court and the Prince of Wales being at open war, and much dirty linen was washed on both sides. This public quarrel between the heir-apparent and his royal parents could not be prolonged without causing much scandal, and it threatened to bring the monarchy into disrepute. On all grounds it was to be deprecated. The well-wishers of the royal family therefore strove to bring about a reconciliation, but for a long time without success. Lord Thurlow, who was the trusted friend of both the King and the Prince of Wales, did everything in his power to heal the breach between them. Others were working too, notably the Princess Royal[2] and Mrs. Fitzherbert, each of whom, from her different standpoint, was unwearied in her endeavours to bring about a truce. Mrs. Fitzherbert's efforts

[1] The incident was not as bad as it sounds, for in those days the presence of bailiffs in the house was no unfrequent occurrence in the mansions of the great, and was often made the subject of a joke by those to whom they paid their unwelcome visits.

[2] Charlotte Augusta Matilda, eldest daughter of George III., Princess Royal (1766–1828), afterwards married the King of Wurtemburg.

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in this direction were magnanimous, for she had so far received no consideration from the King, while the Queen had shown herself decidedly hostile to her. In striving to bring about a reconciliation, therefore, she returned good for evil. She was even to some extent working against her own interests, for the King and Queen were anxious to break off her union with the Prince. But in the long run Mrs. Fitzherbert's unselfishness had its reward. Though to the self-centred it might seem that she was ruining her prospects, she was all unconsciously to herself advancing them. Her conduct on this, as on subsequent occasions, proved to the King and Queen that she was no self-seeker and no intriguer, and gradually their prejudices against her were broken down.

The Prince of Wales was formally reconciled to the King in March 1791. The price demanded of him for the paternal forgiveness was that he should no longer identify himself wholly with the Whig party; he was henceforth to receive at his house Tories as well as Whigs. Perhaps, since the Regency had faded to a distant dream, it cost him little to make this sacrifice of his political friends. The price he hoped to obtain in return for his filial submission was the payment of his debts. But this was not much advanced thereby, for the King declared, now as always, that he would not consent to any increase of his son's income, until he married some Protestant princess from a German court — whom he alone considered to be a suitable bride for the Prince of Wales. However, these disputed questions were not raised at the moment, and the Prince's submission to the King was followed by a reconciliation with the Queen. "A gentleman, who lives in the east end of St. James's Park," writes Horace Walpole, "has been sent for by a lady who has a large house in the west end, and they have kissed and made friends, which he notified by toasting her health in a bumper at the Club." [1]

Some rays of the royal favour, albeit tempered by judicious distance, now began to fall upon Mrs. Fitzherbert. Her disinterested efforts to make the Prince submit himself were known to the King and Queen and appreciated by them. They came to admire her character as a woman, to respect the purity of

[1] "Walpole's Letters," vol. ix.

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her life, to understand the honesty of her motives, and to admit that her influence over the Prince had never been used for her own advancement. The attitude of the King and Queen towards her seems to have changed about this time from dislike to benevolent reserve. They perhaps feared that any nearer recognition would be construed into an acknowledgment of her peculiar position, a position which, notwithstanding all facts, they consistently refused to accept. Yet all about the Court agreed there was no doubt whatever that the Prince of Wales had been through a form of marriage with Mrs. Fitzherbert, though the details were not fully known. The King and Queen accepted Fox's denial, and treated the story of the marriage as a fabrication, but the princes and princesses and the courtiers discussed it freely. Lady Harcourt,[1] for instance, who was in the Queen's household, and enjoyed her favour and confidence to the fullest extent, writes in the year 1790 (the year when the quarrel between the Queen and her son was raging), of a conversation she had with the Duke of Gloucester of "the marriage between the Prince and Mrs. Fitz." Again she relates the following anecdote on the same subject: — "Pss. Royal told me the P. of Wales had won money of the D. of Bedford at Newmarket, and upon the Course as they were riding about he called out to the Duke, 'You know it don't signify what you owe to me, as your Brother-in-law.' Upon which the Duke of Orleans said, 'Qu'est que c'est que ça que vous lui dites là?' 'Je l'appelle' (said the Prince) 'mon beau-frère.' 'Qu'est que ça veut dire; est-ce que la Fitzherbert a une sœur?' 'Non, non' (said the Prince), 'il est l'amant de ma sœur aînée, il en est folle.'"[2]

By all the Royal Family, except the King and Queen, Mrs. Fitzherbert was tacitly accorded the position of morganatic wife. The royal dukes, notably the Dukes of York and Clarence, treated her *en belle sœur*, and with two or three of the princesses she was on terms of friendship. During part of the years 1790 and 1791, Mrs. Fitzherbert resided at her villa at Marble Hill, and here the Prince of Wales and the royal dukes were constant visitors. On the death of Lord North, the Duke

[1] Elizabeth, Countess of Harcourt, Lady of the Bedchamber to Queen Charlotte, wife of the Earl of Harcourt, who was Master of the Horse to George III.
[2] "The Harcourt Papers."

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of Clarence had bought Bushey Park, not far from Mrs. Fitzherbert, and he was living there with the beautiful and accomplished actress, Mrs. Jordan, the mother of his many children. In the summer of 1791 the Countess of Albany, the widow of Prince Charles Edward Stuart, visited England.[1] The Prince of Wales gave a dinner in her honour, and, as a matter of course, he introduced her to Mrs. Fitzherbert, whom she afterwards visited at Richmond. The meeting between these two distinguished women must have been interesting, for though very different in circumstances and in breeding they had one link in common. Both of them were excluded from their rights because they were Roman Catholics.

This summer also, Mrs. Fitzherbert attended the grand masked *fête* given by Mrs. Hobart at her beautiful villa near Fulham, which was one of the events of the season. Mrs. Hobart (afterwards Countess of Berkshire) was a great friend of the Prince of Wales, and, like many other women of fashion at that day, presided at a faro bank or gambling table. We quote the following account of her *fête*, as it affords a curious illustration of the manners of the time: —

"*The Hon. Mrs. Hobart's Rural Breakfast and Promenade, June* 28.

"This long-looked-for, and long-prevented *déjeuner* was given yesterday in spite of the weather. It is almost needless to remark that all the first nobility and fashion about town graced this most delightful *fête*. The Prince of Wales came first, and precisely at one o'clock. About four or five hundred persons were present: amongst them was the Duke of Gloucester, the Duchesses of Rutland and Gordon, the Margravine of Anspach, *Mrs. Fitzherbert*, the Duke of Queensberry, several of the *corps diplomatique*, and many other foreigners of the very first distinction. The Duke of Clarence was expected, but did not attend. The breakfast lasted from two till past seven o'clock.

"The leading person in this entertainment (which was

[1] Louisa, Countess of Albany (1753–1824), by birth a Princess of Stolberg-Gedern. Married in 1772 Prince Charles Edward, and separated from him in 1780. He died in 1788.

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obliged to be confined to the house on account of the weather) was Mrs. Bristow, a near relative of Mrs. Hobart. This lady, who had long resided at the Indian Court of Lucknow, was every inch a queen. Draped in all the magnificence of Eastern grandeur, Mrs. Bristow represented the Queen of Nourjahad, as the "Light of the World" in the Garden of Roses. She was seated in the larger drawing-room, which was very beautifully fitted up with cushions in the Indian style, smoking her hookah, amidst all sorts of the choicest perfumes. Mrs. Bristow was very profuse with otto of roses, drops of which were thrown about the ladies' dresses. The whole house was scented with the most delicious fragrance." [1]

[1] *The European Magazine*, July 1791.

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CHAPTER XV

SUNSHINE AND SHADOW

(1791–1794)

THIS year, 1791, the Duke of York's affairs came to a crisis. His carelessness about money matters, and his betting and gambling habits, had involved him in hopeless embarrassment. Cash and credit were alike exhausted, and his grievance against the King, namely that he had appropriated all the revenues of the see of Osnabrück during the Duke's minority, was past remedy, for the King refused to disburse. Nevertheless it was to his father that the Duke went in his trouble. He was the favourite son, and the King was willing to help him on one condition, namely that he should marry a German Princess of the Protestant faith. This condition the King pressed on all his sons, precedent to his granting any pecuniary relief — an odious one, it must be admitted, and one that proved in some cases unfortunate in its results. Yet in the case of the Duke of York the King no doubt honestly believed that a suitable marriage would be his salvation. He was also, since the Prince of Wales refused to be separated from Mrs. Fitzherbert, and several of his other sons had entered into irregular relations, anxious to secure the succession to the throne in as nearly the direct line as possible. The King had a bride ready for his favourite son, the Princess Royal of Prussia, Frederica Charlotte Ulrica, eldest daughter of Frederick William II. The Duke offered no objection. He was heart-whole, he had met the Princess when he was abroad, and did not dislike her. The alliance was therefore arranged without delay. The Prince of Wales was, of course, consulted in the matter by his devoted brother; he expressed himself well pleased, and raised no difficulties about the marriage treaty, but, says Sir Gilbert Elliot, "He has put in a saving clause for himself in case he chooses to marry, which he thinks probable, if he sees his

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brother happy with his wife, and told the King tha , had he permitted him to go abroad at the time he asked leave to do so (in 1784), he meant to have looked out for a princess who would have suited him, as he was too domestic to bear the thoughts of marrying a woman he did not like." [1] This reads curiously when we remember the Prince's passionate declaration at that very time to Lord Malmesbury, "I will never marry!" But no doubt he deceived himself into thinking that he spoke the truth now as he spoke it then; such was his marvellous power of self-deception, that whatever he wished became to him right and true, simply because he wished it.

The Duke and Duchess of York were married in Berlin on September 29, 1791. They had a tiresome journey to England, owing to the revolutionary spirit then prevailing in France, and at Lisle they were surrounded by a savage mob, and only escaped by obliterating the signs of royalty from their coach and equipage. They arrived in London in the middle of November, and were received with great ceremony by the King and Queen. On November 23, on account of some legal quibble, they were re-married according to the rites of the Church of England. The Prince of Wales gave the bride away.

As there seemed a probability that one day the new Duchess of York might become Queen-Consort, her appearance and manner was much discussed. She has been described as "a very short woman, with a plain face, a neat little figure, and a remarkably small foot;" but despite her small stature the Duchess had a great sense of what was due to her rank and dignity. She was of a strong character, decidedly eccentric, haughty and reserved to strangers, but to her intimates the kindest woman in the world.

Great curiosity was evinced in London society as to how the Duchess would conduct herself towards Mrs. Fitzherbert, not only because of the latter's relation to the Prince, but because of the cordial friendship which was known to exist between her and the Duke of York. Their first meeting, which took place at a ball at the Duchess of Cumberland's, is thus described: "The Duchess looked much better than that first day at court.

[1] "Life and Letters of Sir G. Elliot."

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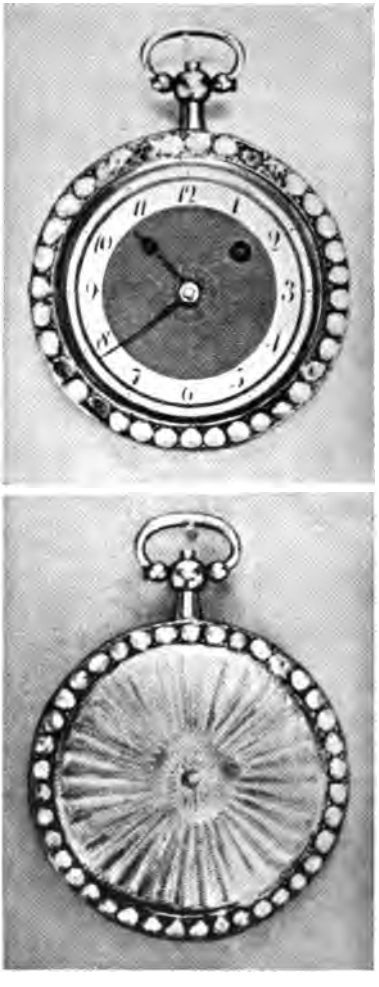

WATCH GIVEN TO MRS. FITZHERBERT
BY THE PRINCE OF WALES

Blue Enamel set with Pearls

(*By permission of* Mr. JOHN HAINES)

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People in general were not presented to her, but several were by the Prince, Duke of York, &c., and the Duchess of Cumberland presented Mrs. Fitz. Both ladies squeezed their fans, and talked for a few minutes, and that was all, so this was the *first* meeting."[1] There were plenty to offer advice as to how the Duchess should conduct herself towards Mrs. Fitzherbert, but she declined to be influenced either by the court on one side, or the Prince of Wales or the Duke on the other. Brought up in the strict etiquette of the Prussian court, she had her own views about wives morganatic. She received Mrs. Fitzherbert without difficulty — that much was due to her character and position; but she treated her with distant civility *de haut en bas*, and would not recognise in any way the link between them. Mrs. Fitzherbert resented this attitude, and the Prince of Wales resented it also. The Duke of York could not force his Duchess to treat Mrs. Fitzherbert with more cordiality, for the Duchess had a will of her own, but the Prince of Wales apparently thought that the Duke could do so if he wished, and a coolness sprang up between the brothers in consequence. Lord Malmesbury, writing in 1792, says that Colonel St. Leger told him, "She [Mrs. Fitzherbert] dislikes the Duchess of York, because the Duchess will not treat her *en belle sœur*. It is that which is the cause of the coolness between the brothers." Apparently the dislike which the two ladies entertained for each other was ineradicable, for fourteen years later Lord Malmesbury writes in his diary: "May 25, 1803. The Duke of York came to me at five, uneasy lest the Duchess should be forced to sup at the same table as Mrs. Fitzherbert at the ball to be given by the Knights of the Bath, on the 1st of June. He talks it over with me . . . says the King and Queen will not hear of it. On the other side he wishes to keep on terms with the Prince. I say I will see Lord Henley, who manages the *fête*, and try to manage it so that there shall be two distinct tables, one for the Prince, to which he is to invite, and another for the Duke and Duchess of York, to which she is to invite her company." Thus the delicate matter was arranged; each lady had a table to herself. The curious part of this family quarrel is that, though a coolness sprang up between the royal brothers, it

[1] Letter of Miss Dee to Lady Harcourt: "Harcourt Papers."

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did not interrupt the warm friendship existing between the Duke of York and Mrs. Fitzherbert, though she was the cause of the coolness. In public the Duke of York felt bound to support the Duchess, whose claim was certainly based on court etiquette, but in private he allowed himself to be governed by his own feelings. His marriage was not a happy one. The Duke was not a model husband, and the Duchess was ill-tempered. Their marriage was unblessed with children, and before long they were to all intents and purposes separated. But they resided under the same roof, for the Duchess was not a woman given to make a scandal.

This year was marked by a further measure of relief to Roman Catholics. By this Act (1791) a number of obnoxious penal laws (some of them obsolete) were repealed; a Roman Catholic could no longer be prosecuted for not attending his parish (Anglican) church, nor for being a Papist, nor for hearing or saying Mass, nor for belonging to any ecclesiastical order of the Church of Rome, nor for performing or taking any part in any form of worship according to the Roman Catholic religion. The abolition of these galling restrictions was a distinct relief to the Roman Catholics, who now began to emerge from the shadow of persecution, under which they had lived for the last two centuries. Roman Catholic places of worship were now built without hindrance, and "missions" were established in different parts of England, not for the purpose of proselytising (the English Roman Catholics of that day did not proselytise), but solely for the purpose of ministering to the religious needs of the little communities of Roman Catholics scattered about the country. The funds for this purpose were provided by wealthy members of the Church. Among these was Mrs. Fitzherbert, who not only endowed a mission at Brambridge, the village where she had grown up, but contributed towards the support of one at Brighton. (The church there was not built until later.) Her religion was part of her life, and she practised it regularly, but quietly and unobtrusively. She seldom spoke of it, and never attempted, in the least degree, to influence others, or to proselytise. This led many to suppose that she had given up her faith in compliance with the wishes of the Prince of Wales. "I hear," writes one, "that Mrs. Fitzherbert has renounced the errors of Popery and eats *maigre* no

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longer."[1] Nothing could be further from the truth. The Prince never, in the slightest degree, attempted to hinder his wife in the practice of her religion, not even in times of popular excitement, when her attendance at Mass was likely to cause embarrassment. Like the King, he favoured the Relief Acts of 1778 and 1791. He was a friend of Sir John Throckmorton and other members of "the Catholic Committee," and he always showed the greatest courtesy to Roman Catholics. His views on the subject of Catholic Emancipation were not at this time known; it was generally supposed that he did not share the King's strong prejudice to admitting Roman Catholics to Parliament, but that he agreed on this subject with Fox and other leading Whigs. Mrs. Fitzherbert never obtruded her views on the burning question of Emancipation; she seemed rather to dread its discussion at Carlton House, and if the question came up she always changed the subject, lest it should seem that she influenced the Prince. Like so many of the English Roman Catholics at that time, she was singularly temperate in her views, and decidedly opposed to proselytising. Her views were rather those of Sir John Throckmorton and the Catholic Committee than of the ultramontane or "papistic" party. It was the fashion among many of the leading English Catholic laity at this time to deprecate undue interference from Rome, and to show rather that they had points of contact with the national religion.[2] No doubt a good deal of this was due to a desire to break down prejudice against a creed which was considered to be Italian and "un-English." They were anxious to show that Roman Catholics could be as loyal to the King and as tolerant of those who differed from them as their fellow-subjects, and so work for the great cause of Emancipation. Mrs. Fitzherbert was not one of those who worked for Emancipation, either directly or indirectly. She seems to have been content with the free practice of her religion. At the same time, she was not, in any sense, unfaithful to her Church, nor forgetful of her co-religionists. An instance of the latter occurred in 1792 at Brighton.

[1] "Charles Long to Viscount Lowther." Lonsdale MSS. Historical MSS. Commission.

[2] But the Church of England was so spiritually dead at that time, that their overtures met with no response, and the strenuous protests of Archbishop Milner and the appointment of Vicars Apostolic by Rome checked this "Gallican" spirit, and brought the leading Roman Catholic laity into line again.

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The French Revolution was then in full blaze. Fugitives were flying from France in great numbers, many to find refuge in England. The burning of the Tuileries, the deposition and imprisonment of the King and Queen, and the massacres in Paris, had produced a profound impression in England, and the greatest sympathy was shown to the French *emigrés*. The edicts against priests and nuns led to monasteries being broken up, and the wholesale flight of religious communities. Among the sufferers was a community of Franciscan nuns, which were located at Montarges, where they had been established for many years. They were expelled with violence by the French revolutionists, and fled for their lives. At Ostend they embarked on a boat for England, and after many days at sea they were eventually landed at Shoreham, near Brighton. The poor nuns were set down on the shore from fishing-boats, wet, penniless, hungry, and with nothing but the clothes they stood up in. Mrs. Fitzherbert, who was then at Brighton, was one of the first to hear of their arrival. She immediately started a subscription among her friends at the Pavilion, and collected enough to provide the nuns with food and lodging. She then drove to Shoreham, where she found the nuns still sitting on the beach, surrounded by a curious and sympathetic crowd. Mrs. Fitzherbert had them conveyed to Brighton, where she arranged a lodging for them in the Ship Inn. In this she was acting not only on her own charitable impulse, but on behalf of the Prince of Wales. His conduct on this occasion exhibits him in a favourable light, and shows how he could be moved to noble and generous actions. What happened to the nuns on their arrival at the Ship Inn is best told in the words of one of the members of the community.

"It was there (at the inn) that we learned the protection accorded to us by the Prince of Wales through the intervention of Mrs. Fitzherbert, who came herself to see us on our arrival. We did not, however, as yet know that the protection extended so far as to defray all our expenses in the town, and that all the nobility who were there had subscribed to this act of benevolence. . . . The Prince of Wales himself came to see the Reverend Mother. He entered into the minutest details of everything which concerned us." [He advised them to remain in England for a time until they could with safety return.]

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"The Prince again came to see us. This time he asked to see the community. The Reverend Mother having assembled us all, he received us with a kindness truly royal. He conjured the Reverend Mother (these were his words) to make the community sit down, while he remained standing. He repeated the advice which he had given the evening before about our journey to Brussels, and he invited us in the most obliging terms to go to London, where we should find all the inhabitants disposed to recompense us for our losses. The want of chairs prevented many of us from being able to sit down. The Prince observed this, and, turning to Mrs. Fitzherbert, he said in that kind manner which is his characteristic, 'See, we are keeping them standing; let us be off, I cannot suffer this any longer.'" [1]

Nor did the Prince's sympathy stop here. He collected for the nuns over £100, and it was by his assistance and advice that they finally settled in England, and founded a religious house near Taunton. Another branch of the same order from Bruges (with which the Wells, Mrs. Fitzherbert's connections by her first marriage, were connected) also fled to England and found an asylum with Sir Edward Smythe (Mrs. Fitzherbert's cousin) at Acton Burnell. A Benedictine mission was also established there during this period. In England generally at this time the generous sentiment of hospitality and humanity overcame the feelings of prejudice against "Popish priests." The nuns were not the only fugitives who received a warm welcome. In one week, over five hundred French people (chiefly aristocrats and priests) were landed at Brighton, including the Archbishop of Avranches and the Dean of Rouen. The Marquise de Beaulé voyaged from Dieppe to Brighton in an open boat in a tempest, and was thrown upon the beach more dead than alive. Her experience was that of many aristocratic ladies of France.

Perhaps the most interesting of these unfortunate fugitives was the young and beautiful Duchesse de Noailles, who fled from Paris for her life, disguised in boy's clothes; she found a fishing-boat at Dieppe, was concealed in a coil of cable, and after many days at sea was landed upon Brighton beach, one

[1] This account is from a MS. preserved at St. Mary's Priory, Princethorpe, Taunton. "Jerningham Letters."

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gusty morning, August 29, 1792. As soon as her arrival became known she "was received with the most polite and cordial hospitality by his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales and Mrs. Fitzherbert." [1] The Duchesse stayed with Mrs. Fitzherbert until other accommodation could be found for her, and when she had recovered from her fatigue she was dressed up in some of Mrs. Fitzherbert's clothes, and entertained with all possible honour by the Prince at the Pavilion. We read: "Mrs. Fitzherbert, the Duchesse de Noailles, and many other ladies of distinction were present at the cricket match, and dined in a marquee pitched on the ground for that purpose. The Prince's band of music attended, and played during the whole time the ladies were at dinner. In the evening Mrs. Fitzherbert, the Duchesse, Lady Clermont, and Miss Pigot" [Mrs. Fitzherbert's lady companion] "walked round the ground, seemingly the better to gratify the spectators with a sight of the French lady. The Duchesse de Noailles appears to be twenty-one or twenty-two years of age. She is very handsome, and her figure and deportment are remarkably interesting." [2]

All this goes to show that Mrs. Fitzherbert's influence over the Prince showed no signs of wane. As Lord Malmesbury wrote in June 1792, "The Prince was more attached to Mrs. Fitzherbert than ever . . . he is now more under her influnece than ever." Perhaps the strongest proof of her influence at this time is that she succeeded in maintaining the estrangement between the Prince and Fox, which had assumed a political as well as a personal aspect. With this the French Revolution had something to do, for the bloody excesses of the revolutionary mob had alienated the sympathy of the moderate Whigs and led to a split in the party, the Duke of Portland and Burke representing the moderate wing and Fox the extremists. The Prince, who had no sympathy for the revolutionary doctrines of Fox, sided with Burke, and this despite the efforts of the Duchess of Devonshire on behalf of Fox. There is little doubt that Mrs. Fitzherbert, who viewed the French Revolution with horror and Fox with detestation, had something to say in this matter. In any event, after Burke's quarrel with Fox, and his "dagger scene" in the House of Commons, the Prince also

[1] *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, September 3, 1792.
[2] Ibid, September 10, 1792.

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separated himself from Fox, and for six years had little communication with him.

For the next two years (from 1792 to 1794) the Prince and Mrs. Fitzherbert led a comparatively secluded life. This was in part forced upon the Prince by circumstances. His debts were again causing him grave embarrassment. The usual appeal to the King was made, and met with the usual refusal. Again came the Prince's ostentatious retrenchment, Carlton House shut up, the household reduced, and the horses sold. The Prince was very little in London during these years. When he was not at Brighton he would take a place in the country, and live there the life of a country gentleman. He gave himself up completely to the pleasures of country life; his chief diversion was hunting. He was devoted to horses, and, notwithstanding his weight, he was a first-rate rider. It used to be a saying at Brighton that, heavy as he was, "he rode so well that he never soiled his nankeens." For the most part the Prince hunted in Hampshire, where he resided for one season at the Grange, near Alton, which he rented or borrowed from Lord Ashburton, and he hunted with the Villebois hounds. The Prince of Wales's plumes still appear on the club buttons. His choice of Hampshire, and that part of it in particular, was no doubt influenced by Mrs. Fitzherbert, whose mother and brothers still lived at Brambridge, and her uncle Mr. Errington and her cousin Harry Errington (a friend of the Prince of Wales) at Red Rice, near Andover. So attached was the Prince to this neighbourhood, that he rented for many years a place called Kempshott, where still linger legends of his tenancy. Mrs. Fitzherbert always accompanied the Prince of Wales on his visits to Hampshire; but she seems generally to have resided at a cottage near by. At Kempshott she chose the decorations of the drawing-room, and the gardens are also said to have been laid out under her direction. The Prince in after years used to say that some of his happiest days were passed at Kempshott. He had as fine a pack of foxhounds in his kennel, and as splendid a lot of hunters in his stables, as could be met with in the county. He was exceedingly popular with all classes, the country squires, farmers, and labourers.

The Prince's love of horses did not stop at hunting. He was for some years an active member of the Jockey Club, and

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he had training stables at Newmarket. His horses were most successful; at the very outset of his racing career he had won the Derby, and during his connection with the turf, which extended over a period of seven years, he won in all one hundred and eighty-five races. The cost of his stud was said to amount to some £30,000 a year. He was especially fond of Newmarket, and his racing colours were always to be seen there, generally leading. Whenever there was a big meeting he and Mrs. Fitzherbert were sure to be present; though sometimes they had not enough money left to get home, and on one occasion Mrs. Fiztherbert was reduced to borrowing £5 from the postillion.

The Prince's connection with the turf terminated abruptly, in consequence of an unpleasantness which arose in connection with his jockey, Sam Chifney, who was called before the stewards of the Jockey Club for unfair riding of the Prince's horse "Escape," and warned off the turf. The Prince resented this treatment of his jockey, and never went to Newmarket again. There is no reason to suppose that the Prince had anything to do with Chifney's action, whether he were innocent or guilty, but many imputations were cast upon him, and the unfortunate incident did much to damage his popularity.

The Prince loved popularity more than anything else, and when it suffered he was sorely distressed. He never sought the cause in some folly of his own, but invariably blamed somebody else. It may be feared that often he threw the blame on the unoffending Mrs. Fitzherbert; she was nearly always with him for one thing, and therefore an easy mark for his anger, and for another there were many mischief-makers ready to promote an estrangement between them. Mrs. Fitzherbert must often have felt during these years that the house of her happiness was built upon sand. Of so unstable a nature was the Prince that it is marvellous she kept her ascendancy over him for so long. She could only have done it by shutting her eyes to much that was going on around her, and by making greater allowances for him than most women would make for any man. Though she stood first in his affections, she by no means stood alone. It was aptly said by Sheridan "that the Prince was too much every lady's man to be the man of any lady," and this was a trait in his character that Mrs. Fitzherbert

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had to accept with what grace she could. She was powerless to alter it, and she knew that continual protests on her part would only lead to further estrangement. She tried to school herself into bearing her trials with calmness, by remembering how women threw themselves at his feet, and by arguing that in this respect she suffered with many another consort of a prince or king. After all she was his wife, and the others were only his mistresses. There is no need to dwell upon the Prince's amours; they were many and notorious, and cannot be defended. But condemnation may be mitigated by remembering his youth, his temperament, and the temptations with which the Prince of Wales, of all men, was surrounded, and also the easy code of morality which prevailed in society at that time. No doubt Mrs. Fitzherbert remembered all this, yet despite her self-discipline she was not always *une femme complaisante*, and there were times when her sorely-tried patience gave way, and she assailed the delinquent with tears and reproaches. The Prince, whose moral sense in this respect was completely wanting, regarded her protests as outbursts of unreasonable jealousy, and her resentment as a proof that she no longer loved him. He was filled with a sense of injury. There were always beautiful and frail sirens ready to whisper in his ear suggestions against Mrs. Fitzherbert; one of them was, that she had been heard to say "it was the rank of his Royal Highness that she loved, more than his person." This was untrue, for if ever the Prince of Wales had one to love him, that one was Maria Fitzherbert, and she showed it by every action of her life. Deep down in his heart he knew this, but it served his purpose for the moment to carry the war into her camp by regarding her remonstrances as proofs of her lack of affection. Rumours of their quarrels and estrangement, therefore, were frequent during these years. Lady Jerningham [1] mentions one of them so far back as 1791. They even penetrated to the circle of the court. Mrs. Harcourt, a confidante of Queen Charlotte, declares that the Duke of Gloucester told her that "the marriage between the Prince and Mrs. Fitzherbert was without much love on either side. He had his amusements elsewhere, but he had much consideration for her. She was sometimes jealous and discontented;

[1] "Jerningham Letters."

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her temper violent, though apparently so quiet. He hoped . . . the Prince would remain in her hands, as she was no political intriguer, and probably, if they parted, he would fall into worse hands." [1]

So matters went on until early in the year 1794, when Mrs. Fitzherbert's position suffered an indirect blow from the annulment of the marriage of Prince Augustus Frederick,[2] a younger brother of the Prince of Wales, with Lady Augusta Murray, daughter of the Earl of Dunmore. The story of this marriage is one of the romances of the House of Hanover. Augustus Frederick, like all the younger sons of George III., spent much of his youth abroad. In the winter of 1792–93 he was in delicate health, and was sent to Rome under the care of a governor, to escape the rigours of the English climate. He was then in his twentieth year. Rome was at that time one of the gayest and most cosmopolitan cities in Europe, and there was a large colony of English residents and visitors. Among the English staying at Rome that winter were the Countess of Dunmore and her family. Her husband, the Earl of Dunmore, was not with her; he was occupied with his duties as Governor of the Bahama Islands.[3] Lady Augusta Murray was the eldest daughter of a numerous family. She was a lady of beauty, wit, and talent. Prince Augustus Frederick fell in love with her, and after four months' courtship he, unknown to her mother, offered her marriage. Lady Augusta at first refused her lover, and pointed out to him the obstacles in the way of their union; but her opposition only increased the young Prince's passion, and in the end she gave way. It was the usual story; first of all she promised never to marry any one else, then they bound themselves by a solemn betrothal according to the fashion of the time. This betrothal was a preliminary to the marriage which followed.

There was in Rome at that time a clergyman of the English Church, named Gunn, and to him the Prince appealed. Despite the penalties of the Royal Marriage Act, the clergyman consented to perform the ceremony of marriage between Prince

[1] Mrs. Harcourt's "Diary."

[2] Augustus Frederick, Duke of Sussex (1773–1843), sixth son of George III.

[3] John Murray, fourth Earl of Dunmore (1732–1809), Governor of New York and Virginia (previous to the American War), was appointed Governor of the Bahamas 1787.

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THE DUKE OF SUSSEX

THE PRINCESS ELIZABETH
DAUGHTER OF GEORGE III.
Landgravine of Hesse-Homburgh

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Augustus Frederick and Lady Augusta, and in April 1793 they were secretly married at Rome, according to the rites of the Church of England, by Mr. Gunn, but without witnesses. Some months later it became necessary that Lady Augusta should tell her mother of the marriage. Dismayed and bewildered, Lady Dunmore consented to keep it secret until its validity could be decided. In the autumn of 1793 the Prince and the Dunmore family returned to England, and there the Prince learned that, apart from the Royal Marriage Act, the fact that the marriage had been solemnised in the Roman jurisdiction might be used to invalidate it. He at once determined to have the ceremony repeated in England, and the banns of marriage between "Augusta Murray, spinster, and Augustus Frederick, bachelor," were published at St. George's, Hanover Square. As no titles were used they passed as two ordinary persons, and the banns excited no remark. They were married over again by the curate, who had no knowledge of whom he was marrying. When the King and the Queen heard of Prince Augustus Frederick's marriage, their wrath knew no bounds. Despite the tears and prayers of the wedded lovers, despite the birth and position of Lady Augusta, and the fact that she was with child, the King at once took steps, under the Royal Marriage Act of 1772, to have the marriage annulled and set aside. This was the first case under the Act, for the marriages of the King's two brothers without the consent of the King had taken place previous to the passing of the Act; the marriage of the Prince of Wales to Mrs. Fitzherbert had taken place since, but it had never been acknowledged. It is not necessary to go into the details of this case, which was in the nature of a test case. Of course the King gained his point, for the courts of law proved themselves as obsequious to his wishes as Parliament had done. By a formal process the Court of Privileges declared both the marriage in England and the marriage at Rome to be null and void. The penalties of *premunire* were not enforced (it was practically impossible to enforce them); but to the unhappy husband and wife the annulment of their marriage was penalty enough. Prince Augustus Frederick protested vehemently against the decision, but his protest was disregarded. He wrote to his father, and begged to be allowed to abandon his rights to the succession, and to sink into the character of a

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private gentleman, so that he might be regarded as the husband of his wife. His prayer was rejected with scorn. Lady Augusta then refused to occupy an anomalous position, and she withdrew from her husband against his will. The Prince always maintained that she was his wife. Two children were born of the marrage, a boy and a girl.[1] In consequence of the Royal Marriage Act these children were regarded as born out of wedlock. But a complication arose, for though illegitimate in England they were legitimate in Hanover, and the son was later declared eligible to succeed to the throne of Hanover, in failure of the male issue of the Duke of Cumberland.[2] The King so far recognised the anomalous state of affairs as to grant in 1806 a Royal license to Lady Augusta to assume the title of Comtesse d'Ameland.

The course of this unhappy affair to its untoward ending was watched with keen interest by Mrs. Fitzherbert. The decision of the Court of Privileges made it clear to her that, even if her marriage were acknowledged at some future time, it would always be regarded as illegal. For if Lady Augusta Murray's marriage to Prince Augustus Frederick (a sixth son, and thus far removed from the succession to the throne) was refused the approval of the King and the sanction of the law, what chance had Mrs. Fitzherbert, who had married the heir-apparent, of any recognition? Lady Augusta Murray was a member of the Church of England, Mrs. Fitzherbert was a member of the Church of Rome. Moreover, Lady Augusta, though a subject, could boast of royal descent on both sides. This fact might have led George III. to pause before he cast a slur upon this virtuous woman, for her pedigree was an illustrious one, in a sense as illustrious as that of his consort from Mecklenburg-Strelitz. True, Lady Augusta was British and not German. On her father's side she could trace back her

[1] The son was known as Sir Augustus d'Este, the daughter married Lord Truro. Lady Augusta Murray died in 1830. The Duke of Sussex after a short interval married Lady Cecilia Buggin (*née* Underwood) who was later created by Queen Victoria Duchess of Inverness.

[2] This contingency did not arise. On the accession of Queen Victoria, by the operation of the Salic Law Hanover became separated from England, and the Duke of Cumberland became King of Hanover as Ernest Augustus I. He was succeeded by his son George V., "the blind King." The *de jure* King of Hanover is his son, the present Duke of Cumberland, who is robbed of his rights by Prussia.

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lineage, through the Stanleys, to the daughter of Henry VII of England; through the same line she could establish her descent from William I., Prince of Orange, and Louis, Duke of Montpensier; again, from the same source she could show her descent from Charles VII. of France. On the side of her mother, who was a Stuart, she could trace back her descent *in the direct line* to the Hamiltons, Dukes of Chatelherault, and to James II., King of Scotland. Surely the daughter of an earl with a pedigree like this was as fit a mate for a younger son of a King of England, as some obscure German Princess? But German traditions unfortunately prevailed in the court of George III., and thus Lady Augusta was placed in the light of the Prince's mistress, and an insult was cast not only upon her, but on her family, and through them on the whole body of the British peerage.

The decision of the Court of Privileges finally closed the door upon Mrs. Fitzherbert's hopes of restitution, had any remained after the denials of her marriage in Parliament. It was now made clear to her, beyond any shadow of doubt, that she had nothing to trust to but the honour of her husband, and events soon showed that she trusted to a broken reed.

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CHAPTER XVI

THE FIRST SEPARATION

(1794–1795)

By this time the Prince's affairs were again in a desperate condition, and it became obvious, even to him, that the day of reckoning could not be delayed much longer. Sunk in debt and difficulties, he was at his wits' end for money. All the usual sources of relief were closed to him; the Jews and money-lenders would not advance him a penny more. Wearied by fruitless applications, and disgusted with barren promises, many of the Prince's tradesmen refused any longer to execute his orders, and, denied admission to his palace, some of them stopped him in the streets with demands for payment; even the workmen employed at Carlton House solicited their wages in vain, and at last presented a petition for payment to the Prime Minister, who referred them back to the Prince. Never was Prince in so pitiful a plight before. Driven to desperation, he tried to raise money at exorbitant interest on *post obits* on the King's life; these deeds were signed by the Prince of Wales and his two brothers, the Dukes of York and Clarence. Double the sum lent was to be repaid when the King died, or any of the three royal brothers came to the throne. But even these terms failed to tempt the lenders, for only some £30,000 was raised. The Prince went further still, and offered £10,000 and an Irish peerage after the King's death for every £5000 lent to him now. But even for this reward he could raise little or nothing, so dishonoured were his bonds. Few would believe his promises, even when given in writing, for so many accusations had been brought against him of breach of faith, and repudiation of obligations. Besides, it was well known that the Prince regarded all those to whom he owed money as his worst enemies.

By the middle of the year 1793 the Prince of Wales had

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exhausted every resource, and was forced to apply once more to the King. Lord Malmesbury was in London at the time; the Prince sent for him, and told him the tale of his "total ruin." Several executions had been in his house, he said, Lord Rawdon had saved him from one, but what was one among so many? his debts amounted to £375,000. Lord Malmesbury was implored to bring the matter before the King, and to tell him in the event of refusal that the Prince must break up his establishment and live abroad. Lord Malmesbury seems to have shifted the task on to Lord Southampton, who (he must have been used to it by this time) drew up yet another schedule of the Prince's debts, and laid it before the King. But the King was obdurate. In vain the Prince promised retrenchment and reform; the King heard him unmoved. The King's position was much stronger than in 1787, when the Prince had forced his hand. From a variety of causes George III. was now popular with the country. The violence of the French Revolution had, by contrast, increased the popularity of the monarchy in England. It had also shattered the Whig party. The Prince was estranged from Fox, the only man who could have carried the matter of his debts through the House of Commons, and he had no friends of importance in either House of Parliament. The King was master of the situation, and could dictate terms to his son. His terms were these: — The Prince of Wales must marry some Protestant Princess of Germany. With so large a royal family of sons and daughters there seemed no danger to the succession to the throne. But none of them was married except the Duke of York, and his marriage had turned out badly; moreover, the Duchess had no children, and the doctors said she was unlikely ever to have any. The unhappiness of this marriage of policy did not deter the King from urging a similar marriage on his eldest son. His terms were absolute. If the Prince would not marry as he wished, he would not move a step to have his debts paid. Indeed he would go further, and instruct the Government to oppose any, and every, application in Parliament.

At first the Prince refused to entertain the idea, as he had refused before. He knew that he was in honour bound to Mrs. Fitzherbert, and though he would not publicly acknowledge his marriage to her, yet in his heart he recoiled from the perjury involved by his deserting her and marrying some one

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else. It was a struggle between his conscience and his necessity; and while this struggle was going on there came the momentous decision of the Court of Privileges, dissolving the marriage of Prince Augustus Frederick and Lady Augusta Murray. This decision, pronounced by the highest legal authorities in the realm, not only annulled the marriage, but expressly left the Prince free to marry again if he would. Coming when it did, the pronouncement was not without influence on the volatile mind of the Prince of Wales. It did not quiet his conscience altogether, but it stifled it. It shifted the responsibility from his own shoulders to those of the eminent jurists who gave the decision, and built a golden bridge for him to retreat, if he wished, from his solemn engagement to Mrs. Fitzherbert. Yet even so he hesitated, for despite their occasional quarrels caused by his infidelities, and the difficulties which arose from her religion, Mrs. Fitzherbert was still the first woman in the world to him, and so far as he loved any one he loved her. While he stood thus at the parting of the ways, his evil genius appeared on the scene in the shape of Frances, Countess of Jersey.[1]

Lady Jersey, who before her marriage had been known as the "beautiful Miss Twysden," was the daughter of an Irish Bishop, and married Lord Jersey, who held high office in the Court of George III. Ever susceptible to the charms of female beauty, the fickle Prince fell a victim to her wiles. At the time the Prince came under her influence Lady Jersey was well past her youth, and the mother of a numerous family — indeed she was already a grandmother. To the Prince her mature age was an additional attraction, for, in the earlier part of his life, he always preferred women older than himself. Lady Jersey was still in the meridian of her charms, and she was undoubtedly a fascinating woman. Wraxall speaks of her "irresistible fascination and charm." Her beauty was of a type which appealed wholly to the senses, but she had wit and ambition with it. She was a passionate, an unprincipled, and intriguing woman, yet withal a very fine lady. She was a great friend of Lady Harcourt,[2] and through her a favourite of Queen Charlotte. From the

[1] Frances, Countess of Jersey, daughter of the Bishop of Raphoe, who married the fourth Earl of Jersey, Lord Chamberlain and Master of the Buckhounds.

[2] Lady Harcourt was Lady of the Bedchamber to Queen Charlotte; Lord Harcourt was Master of the Horse to George III.

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moment that chance threw her in the Prince's way she used all her arts to enslave him, and before long he was completely subjugated. Her rank and position at court made her different from those other ladies of whom he had made easy conquests, and the difference lent a zest. Queen Charlotte soon came to know of the Prince of Wales's infatuation for Lady Jersey. The Queen posed as a dragon of virtue, and no doubt she was so, but in this case, so far from disapproving of her son's *liaison*, she seemed rather to encourage it; at least she did not withdraw her favour from Lady Jersey, who stood higher with her than before. Queen Charlotte was anxious to break Mrs. Fitzherbert's influence over her son, and Lady Jersey, knowing this, at once set to work to undermine it. She piqued the Prince's vanity by repeating the current gossip that Mrs. Fitzherbert cared for his rank alone. She artfully insinuated that his continual connection with a Roman Catholic was the sole cause of his unpopularity, she exaggerated the Protestant prejudice against her, she sympathised with the Prince in his money troubles, and hinted that Mrs. Fitzherbert was an insuperable obstacle to their settlement; she made light of that lady's claims upon the Prince, she urged that he was not bound to her in any way, that he was perfectly free to marry whom he wished. Had not eminent lawyers and godly bishops decided to that effect in the case of Prince Augustus Frederick? Mrs. Fitzherbert was taking an unfair advantage of an act of boyish folly. Lady Jersey knew the wishes of the King and Queen with regard to the Prince's marriage to a German princess, and she imagined that if she could bring it about she would advance her own interests at court. Such a marriage of policy, she argued, would render the breach with Mrs. Fitzherbert complete and final. On the other hand, it would not affect *her* influence over the Prince, for he was sure to regard his wife with indifference, and she (Lady Jersey) would reign supreme.

The Prince listened to the voice of the temptress, and the fact that he listened showed her that he was yielding. Perhaps he was willing to be persuaded, and when persuasion came from such a quarter he could not resist it. The combined effect of Lady Jersey's allurements and arguments, and his own desperate financial condition, proved too strong for the Prince; he yielded so far as to take the preliminary step of breaking with Mrs. Fitzherbert.

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The blow came in June 1794, and found Mrs. Fitzherbert quite unprepared. She was then staying at her villa near Richmond, and the Prince was at Brighton. Mrs. Fitzherbert intended to go to Brighton later. In the meanwhile the Prince had arranged to meet her at dinner at the Duke of Clarence's at Bushey on a certain day. She had no idea that anything was wrong between them; for she had recently received the following hurried note from the Prince at Brighton: —

"My dear Love, — I have just receiv'd a letter from my Sister by the [illegible] this Evening, desiring me to come to Windsor, which tho' exceptionally inconvenient to me at this moment in particular, owing to my being to give my annual Regimental dinner on Wednesday, I mean to comply with, & set out to-morrow morning early, having put off my dinner & all my Company to Friday. I therefore mean to pass Wednesday in London & return here on Thursday — I have just been dining at the General's, where we have had a very pleasant and a very jolly party. Adieu my dear Love, excuse haste, — Ever Thine,

"G. P.

"Brighton, *June* 23, 1794." [1]

When Mrs. Fitzherbert arrived at the Duke of Clarence's she found the Prince was not there. But a letter from him was given to her, saying he would never enter her house again. Lord Stourton gives the following account of the episode, which, though it does not wholly tally with the foregoing letter, may be regarded as substantially correct: — "Her first separation from the Prince was preceded by no quarrel or even coolness, and came upon her quite unexpectedly. She received, when sitting down to dinner at the table of William IV., then Duke of Clarence, the first intimation of the loss of her ascendency over the affections of the Prince; having only the preceding day received a note from his Royal Highness, written in his usual strain of friendship, and speaking of their appointed engagement

[1] This letter was found among Mrs. Fitzherbert's papers after her death; it was one of the few which escaped being burnt in 1833, probably because she had mislaid it. It is endorsed in her own handwriting, "This letter I receaved the morg of the day the Prince sent me word, he would never enter my house (Lady Jersey's influence)." The letter was lent me by one who cherishes the memory of Mrs. Fitzherbert.

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to dine at the house of the Duke of Clarence. The Prince's letter was written from Brighton, where he had met Lady Jersey. From that time she never saw the Prince. . . ." [1]

Mrs. Fitzherbert knew the quarter whence the blow came; she knew that Lady Jersey was with the Prince, and, wounded in her love and her pride, she made no answer to his letter, and seems to have had no further communication with him, at least directly. As the Prince gave no explanation for his extraordinary conduct, she sought none. She abandoned her intention of going to Brighton for the summer, and for a short time she appears to have gone abroad. Some say she went to Switzerland, and from the troubled state of France at the time, this seems a probable place of her retreat. It is said that the Prince repented after a few days, and was anxious to see her and offer an explanation. But she withdrew without a word, and left the field clear for her rival. From a tactical point of view this was a mistake, for with so unstable a character as the Prince, "out of sight, out of mind," was always true. Her silence seemed to him a proof that she no longer loved him. Perhaps, had she been more yielding, what happened later would never have taken place.

Meanwhile rumour, which had so often prophesied the separation, was busy again. Lord Mornington writes to Lord Grenville (Brighton, July 15, 1794): "I heard last night from no less authority than Tom the Third [2] that a treaty of separation and provision is on foot (if not already concluded) between his Royal Highness and the late 'Princess Fitz.' I think you ought to marry his Royal Highness to some *frow* immediately; and I am told (by the same eminent authority) that he is very well disposed to take such a wife, as it may be his Majesty's pleasure to provide for him." [3]

The surmise proved correct. Swayed by the prompting of self-interest, worried by his debts, influenced by the sensuous wiles of Lady Jersey, resentful at the way in which Mrs. Fitzherbert had received his communication, giving him silence when he had expected tears, contempt instead of entreaties and

[1] Langdale, *op. cit.*

[2] Mr. Thomas William Coke of Holkham, first Earl of Leicester (1752–1842), also known as "King Tom."

[3] Fortescue MSS. Historical MSS. Com., vol. ii.

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reproaches, the Prince stifled the voice of his conscience and made the plunge.

Within six weeks of his breaking from Mrs. Fitzherbert the Prince announced to the King his willingness to agree to his terms and marry as his father wished. Having at last brought himself to the point, the Prince did not care who his bride was, provided his debts were paid. He had to seek a wife among the Protestant princesses of Germany, and he is reported to have said "that one d——d German *frow* was as good as another." Among this great company of marriageable princesses two stood out pre-eminently — Louise, Princess of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, niece of Queen Charlotte, and Caroline, Princess of Brunswick, niece of George III.

The former princess, Princess Louise, was infinitely superior in beauty, refinement, and abilities to the other. She afterwards became the famous Queen Louise of Prussia. But unfortunately for England (though perhaps fortunately for herself), the Prince would not hear of her as a wife; she was his mother's niece, her favourite candidate for the honour of his hand, and that was sufficient for him to refuse her. He had no wish to raise a second princess of the house of Mecklenburg to the throne of England; "one of that family was enough," he said rudely. His choice fell on his first cousin, Caroline of Brunswick, whose mother, the King's sister, was by birth an Englishwoman. His choice is said to have been dictated by Lady Jersey, to whom the unsuitable character of this Princess was known by report. Nothing could be farther from her schemes than that the Prince should fall in love with his wife, as he might have done had he married the beautiful and accomplished Princess Louise. Therefore, to quote Lord Holland: "She [Lady Jersey] may have decided his preference for a woman of indelicate manners, indifferent character, and not very inviting appearance, from the hope that disgust for the wife would secure constancy to the mistress." Thus came about the Prince's strange choice of Caroline of Brunswick, strange because if he had searched all over Europe he could not have found a princess more unsuited to him in every respect. The Prince did not trouble to make any inquiries about his bride. Having made up his mind to marry, he acted, as he always did, in a hurry; perhaps he feared that if he delayed or hesitated

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longer his conscience might awaken. He went to the King at once. "The Prince of Wales," said Lord Liverpool, "told his father very abruptly one day, on his return from hunting, that he wished to marry. 'Well,' said the King, 'I will then, with your consent, send some confidential person to report on the Protestant princesses of the stated age and character, but qualified for such an alliance. Your wife must be a Protestant and a princess: in all other respects your choice is unfettered.' 'It is made,' replied the Prince; 'the daughter of the Duke of Brunswick.' George III. replied that to his own niece he could take no exception; but yet he recommended his son to make more circumstantial inquiries about her person and manners, &c. The Prince pretended to have done so." [1]

The King lost no time in communicating the glad news to his Prime Minister; he wrote to Pitt: —

"WEYMOUTH, *August* 24, 1794.

"Agreeable to what I mentioned to Mr. Pitt before I came here, I have this morning seen the Prince of Wales, who has acquainted me with his having broken off all connection with Mrs. Fitzherbert, and his desire of entering into a more creditable line of life by marrying; expressing at the same time that my niece, the Princess of Brunswick, may be the person. Undoubtedly she is the person who naturally must be most agreeable to *me*. I expressed my approbation of the idea, provided his plan was to lead a life that would make him appear respectable, and consequently render the Princess happy. He assured me that he perfectly coincided with me in opinion. I then said that till Parliament assembled, no arrangement could be taken except my sounding my sister, that no idea of any other marriage may be encouraged.[2]

"G. R."

The King then set about "sounding his sister," an empty phrase, for the Duchess of Brunswick,[3] who dearly loved her native country, was overjoyed at the brilliant prospect thus

[1] "Memoirs of the Whig Party." Lord Liverpool in 1820 gave Lord Holland the above account, saying that he had it directly from George III.

[2] Lord Stanhope's "Life of Pitt," ii. 20. (Appendix.)

[3] Augusta, eldest daughter of Frederick Prince of Wales and sister of George III (1737–1813), married Charles William, Duke of Brunswick.

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opened to her daughter. In November the indispensable Lord Malmesbury was despatched to Brunswick to settle the details of the marriage treaty and to bring the bride to England.

So far nothing had been made public on the subject, but rumour, always busy, travelled even to Mrs. Fitzherbert in her retirement and whispered of the projected marriage of the Prince of Wales. She had heard the rumour so often before, that at first she discredited it, for she remembered his vows and promises. But the rumour became so persistent and so explicit that her heart misgave her. The Prince's silence too was ominous. The first flush of her anger and grief at his letter had now subsided; she could review matters more calmly. She began to make excuses for him; she attributed their misunderstanding to Lady Jersey, but she did not believe that lady could maintain her sway very long; she knew, or thought she knew, the Prince's character too well. He had often gone astray before, and had always come back to her, after a longer or a shorter interval, penitent and full of promises of amendment. She had forgiven so much and overlooked so much that this time she had determined to be sterner. Therefore she had returned no answer to his letter (he did not indeed ask for one) and had gone away without a word. But when the weeks passed and she heard nothing from him it began to be borne in upon her that this estrangement was likely to be serious. She blamed herself for having acted so hastily in going abroad. She returned to England in September and went to her villa at Richmond. There the rumour again assailed her that the Prince of Wales was betrothed to a German princess. Yet still she persisted in disbelieving, in hoping against hope. At last, in November, she was informed from an authoritative source that the Prince was going to marry his cousin, the Princess Caroline of Brunswick.

To Mrs. Fitzherbert the news came as a crushing blow, an overwhelming revelation of the Prince's perfidy. It was a public repudiation of her, even more damaging than Fox's memorable speech in Parliament. Her happiness, her dignity, her fortune, all suffered by it, and though she knew herself to be his wife in the sight of her Church (which was to her in the sight of God), in the eyes of the world she was made to appear nothing but a cast-off mistress. Lady Augusta Murray, though

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repudiated by the law, had at least consolation in the fact that her marriage, whether legal or illegal, was publicly acknowledged to have taken place, and her husband maintained that she was his wife, notwithstanding the decision of the courts of law. Mrs. Fitzherbert had no such consolation. The fact of her marriage had been twice denied in Parliament, and her husband now had publicly repudiated her. She had in her possession documents which proved beyond all doubt that she was married to the Prince, and, if she chose to publish them, her character would be cleared. It was in her power to inflict a most damaging blow on the man who had thus betrayed her, yet the thought of taking such revenge never crossed her mind. Even now, when he did her the cruellest wrong a man could do a woman, she loved him, and was disposed to make excuses for him, laying the blame on his desperate plight, and on his evil advisers rather than on himself.

Soon after the news of the betrothal had been communicated to her, Mrs. Fitzherbert received a communication from the Prince's lawyers informing her that the £3000 a year which had been granted to her since her marriage would be continued as before. Her first impulse was to refuse it, but at this point her uncle, Mr. Errington, intervened, and positively forbade her to do so. He, like all Mrs. Fitzherbert's relatives and friends, was full of sympathy for her, but he knew the volatile character of the Prince, and he took the view that the separation, which had now come, was inevitable sooner or later — the only wonder to him was that it had not come before. He had tried in 1785 to dissuade his niece from this ill-advised union, but as she was inflexible, he satisfied himself that the marriage was valid according to the law of his Church, and then let things go. So, now that separation had come, he was too wise to remonstrate with either of the parties, but contented himself with looking after his niece's interests as well as he could. The task was easy, for Mr. Errington found the Prince more than ready to meet him half-way. The offer to continue the annuity of £3000 was quite spontaneous on the part of the Prince. More than that, he had requested the Lord Chancellor, Lord Loughborough, to ask the King, in the event of the Prince's death before that of his father, to take it upon himself to continue to Mrs. Fitzherbert the pension. To this George

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III. consented without demur. The Lord Chancellor wrote to the Prince of Wales: —

"*December* 19, 1794.

"SIR, — In obedience to your Royal Highness's commands, I had the honour of representing to his Majesty the anxiety you had expressed lest a possible though very improbable event might interrupt the continuance of that provision you had thought proper to make for a Lady who had been distinguished by your regard, and at the same time to express the hope your Royal Highness entertained that in such an event his Majesty's goodness might extend to the prolongation of it. His Majesty was pleased to receive this communication in the most gracious manner, observing at the same time that in the natural order of things the occasion was not likely to present itself, but that your Royal Highness had no reason to entertain any uneasiness on this account.

"I have the honour to be, with the most perfect devotion, Sir, your Royal Highness's most faithful and most obedient servant,

"LOUGHBOROUGH."

The Prince sent this letter to Miss Pigot, and asked her to give it to Mrs. Fitzherbert as an additional proof of his care for her future welfare.[1] The incident is creditable both to the Prince and the King. George III., though he did not know the whole truth about his son's illegal marriage, recognised that Mrs. Fitzherbert had special claims on his consideration. Queen Charlotte recognised them also, and from this time forward both the King and the Queen showed her unvarying kindness. Perhaps their consciences were not quite easy about the way she had been treated, and this made them the kinder. Lord Stourton says that Mrs. Fitzherbert frequently assured him: — "That there was not one of the royal family who had not acted with kindness to her. She particularly instanced the Queen; and, as for George III., from the time she set footing in England till he ceased to reign, had he been her own father, he could not have acted towards her with greater tenderness and affection." This reads like exaggeration, unless the words

[1] Mrs. Fitzherbert in 1833 placed the letter among her papers deposited at Coutts's Bank, though it does not appear in the list given by Langdale, *op. cit.* p. 87. It is published here by permission of his Majesty the King.

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"from the time she set footing in England" refer to her return from Switzerland in 1794, when the negotiations for her future provision were pending. Previously to that date George III. does not seem to have shown her any consideration, and his allusion to her in his letter to Mr. Pitt could hardly be described as paternal.

No hint of this confidential negotiation reached the public ear. The air was thick with rumour and conjecture, but beyond the fact that the Prince and Mrs. Fitzherbert had separated, nothing definite was known. Later it leaked out that an adequate provision had been made for her, and evidence of the completeness of the separation was given to the world by Mrs. Fitzherbert's selling her mansion in Pall Mall and giving up her house at Brighton.

A few days after George III. had guaranteed the continuance of Mrs. Fitzherbert's pension, in the event of the prior death of his eldest son, the King announced the forthcoming marriage in a speech which he delivered to both houses of Parliament on December 30, 1794. "I have," said his Majesty, "the greatest satisfaction in announcing to you the conclusion of a treaty of marriage between my dear son, the Prince of Wales, and the Princess Caroline, daughter of the Duke of Brunswick." Then he went on to recommend that a suitable provision be made for the Prince's establishment. This was the first official announcement of the marriage.

The public curiosity was great. What would Mrs. Fitzherbert say? What would she do? But Mrs. Fitzherbert uttered no cry, and made no complaint. She closed her doors to her friends, and went into retirement as though she were widowed, thus escaping the sympathy of those who wished her well, and the curious gaze of the vulgar. In this, as in all crises of her life, her conduct was admirable in its dignity and self-restraint.

Meanwhile preparations for the marriage between the Prince of Wales and Princess Caroline of Brunswick went on apace. Lord Malmesbury has told us in full the story of his mission to Brunswick,[1] where the bride-elect resided. There is no need to repeat it here. Suffice it to say that Lord Malmes-

[1] Malmesbury, *op. cit.*

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bury records from the first that he had misgivings; but his judgment of the Princess was perhaps prejudiced. Princess Caroline had her good qualities, but they were apparently those which this courtier and diplomatist was incapable of appreciating. She was warm-hearted, candid, generous, and brave. There was nothing mean or paltry in her disposition, and with a kindly and judicious guide she might have developed into a fine character. Lord Malmesbury saw in her only an ungraceful and undignified young woman, whose florid good looks and boisterous good-humour we remarked by an utter absence of dignity and refinement. Her conversation was broad, sometimes even coarse; she was careless in her dress and not very cleanly in her person. She was given to making the most indiscreet confidences, and to cultivating excessive familiarity with her inferiors. *The maîtresse en titre* of the Duke of Brunswick thus spoke of her to Lord Malmesbury, in words that were almost prophetic: "She is not corrupted; she has never done anything really bad, but she has no command of her words; she confides in every one, and when she is surrounded in London with clever intriguers, everything she says will be repeated and distorted." [1] It may be added that, though no beauty, she was not bad-looking. Mrs. Harcourt writes, "In looks there is some resemblance to what Mrs. Fitzherbert was when young." And again, "She is all openness of heart, and has not a shadow of pride." [2]

The Princess Caroline made no concealment of her delight at the prospect of becoming Princess of Wales; she was not hypocritical enough to profess either respect or affection for her future husband; she had never seen him, but she knew all about him and his mode of life, and she asked many questions concerning matters on which it would have been better taste for her to have kept silence. She had heard the rumours of his marriage with Mrs. Fitzherbert, but she regarded it as a left-handed marriage, and therefore of no account — the German view. There is a correspondence published, evidently spurious, in which the Prince is made to tell his future wife quite frankly that he can have neither love nor respect for her,

[1] Lord Malmesbury's "Memoirs."
[2] "Harcourt Papers." (The Hon. Mrs. Harcourt was the wife of General Harcourt.)

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THE PRINCESS CAROLINE OF BRUNSWICK

(*From a Picture in the Palace at Brunswick*)

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that he is marrying simply to pay his debts, that all his heart is given to another woman, whom he regards as his wife, and that, if she consulted her happiness, it would be better for her not to come to England. The Princess is made to reply that what he had told her makes no difference, she knows her duty. These letters must be forgeries, for many genuine letters of the Prince to Lord Malmesbury are in existence, in which he urges the envoy to "set off instantly" and bring the Princess with all speed to England (probably his creditors were pressing), to which Lord Malmesbury replies that "not an hour shall be lost." Yet by this time, though Lord Malmesbury kept a discreet silence, many unflattering reports of the person, character, and manners of the Princess Caroline were being circulated about the English Court, and must have reached the ears of the Prince of Wales. He heeded them not, for the articles of the marriage-treaty had been signed, and more important still, the Prince had received assurances that his debts would be paid in full. It was too late to draw back with dignity, even if he had been so minded. He probably did not care a straw for these rumours. It was not a wife he wanted, but money; and so long as the wife was the means of his getting the money, he cared for little else. He was already prejudiced against the Princess. The moment Lady Jersey knew that the marriage-treaty was signed, she left off poisoning the Prince's mind against Mrs. Fitzherbert, and concentrated all her energies on maligning his betrothed bride. She repeated and exaggerated all the gossip and scandal she could gather regarding the Princess Caroline and her early life. Queen Charlotte, who was annoyed by the Prince's curt refusal of her niece, the Princess Louise, was also prejudiced against Princess Caroline. Years ago she had quarrelled with her mother, and was prepared to keep up the family feud with the daughter. She even consented to the appointment of Lady Jersey (though the relations between the Prince and that lady were notorious) as lady-in-waiting to the new Princess of Wales.

Lord Malmesbury brought the Princess to England in July 1795. Mrs. Harcourt had attended her from Hanover, and Lady Jersey went down to meet the Princess on her landing with smooth words on her lips, and malice and hatred in her heart. "Thus did she arrive in England, conducted by her

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bitterest enemy (a lady well practised in the arts of tormenting, insulting, and degrading a rival) to a husband half estranged already, with no protection but at court, where, if the King was disposed to take part against his heir-apparent, old resentments and recent disappointments rendered the Queen averse to the daughter of the Duchess of Brunswick." [1]

The friendless Princess was alone; her mother had parted from her at Stade, and it was not permitted that any one of her country-women should come with her. Her habit of indiscreet confidences began at once. She confided to Lady Jersey on the road to London the tale of an early attachment to a man of inferior birth, and Lady Jersey afterwards repeated every word she had said with gross exaggerations to the Prince of Wales. The story of her arrival in London and her reception by the Prince of Wales is well known. As soon as the Princess arrived at St. James's Palace, Lord Malmesbury went to tell the Prince of Wales. He came immediately; it was noticed that he was agitated. What followed is best told by Lord Malmesbury: "I, according to the established etiquette, introduced (no one else being in the room) the Princess Caroline to him. She, very properly, in consequence of my saying that it was the right mode of proceeding, attempted to kneel to him. He raised her gracefully enough and embraced her, said barely one word, turned round, retired to a distant part of the apartment, and, calling to me, said: 'Harris, I am not well: pray get me a glass of brandy.' I said: 'Sir, had you not better have a glass of water?' Upon which he, much out of humour, said *with an oath:* 'No; I will go directly to the Queen.' And away he went."

Surely there never was a stranger scene. The Princess, astounded at this extraordinary reception, exclaimed: "*Mon Dieu!* is he always like that?" Then she added, "I find him *very fat*, and not at all like the picture sent me." Lord Malmesbury tried to make excuses for him, but the Princess was much too shrewd to be imposed upon. She was much disappointed, not only with her reception, but with the person of her future husband, and she proceeded to make many more uncomplimentary remarks.

[1] Holland, *op. cit.*

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In the evening there was a small dinner party at St. James's, at which the Prince and his betrothed met again. The Princess had by now recovered her spirits; she was probably very nervous, she was certainly much excited, and not at all like what a modest bride should be. She talked incessantly. Lord Malmesbury speaks of her "flippant, rattling, affected wit." She rallied the Prince before all the company on his well-known *penchant* with absolute lack of discretion. The Prince was disgusted. Some excuse must be made for the Princess on this occasion. She had already discovered the *liaison* between her future husband and Lady Jersey. It hurt her to the quick, and she assumed this air of pertness in order to pretend that she did not care. "The first moment I saw my *futur* and Lady Jersey together I knew how it all was," she said later, "and I said to myself, 'Oh, very well.' I took my *partie*." [1] When the dinner was over the King and Queen, and the other members of the royal family, came to welcome the Princess. It was noticed that the King was cordial and affectionate, but the Queen was very cold.

During the three days that elapsed between the arrival of the Princess Caroline and the marriage, the Prince of Wales was in a whirl of feeling and nervous agitation. He found his bride even less to his taste than Lady Jersey had predicted; he already disliked her, and this dislike, says Lord Malmesbury, "when left to herself the Princess had not the talent to remove, but by observing the same giddy manners and the same coarse sarcasm increased it until it became positive hatred." Yet it was not to Lady Jersey that the Prince's thoughts reverted, but to his discarded wife, Maria Fitzherbert. Not all the allurements of Lady Jersey, nor all the potations in which he freely indulged, could dull the voice of conscience. His love for her had returned with tenfold force, and he shrank with abhorrence from doing her the wrong involved by this marriage, more especially doubtless because the bride was so little to his liking. He bitterly upbraided his father and mother for having urged him to marry. He cursed his own weakness in yielding. The King resented this vacillation, and said testily that he would take the responsibility of breaking off the marriage if the Prince

[1] Bury, *op. cit.*

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really wished it. But as this involved the non-payment of the Prince's debts, they were merely idle words. The Queen, who suspected the truth, contented herself by saying, "You know, George, it is for *you* to say whether you can marry the Princess or not," thus adroitly shifting the responsibility off her own shoulders. The Prince lacked the courage to face the situation, yet he was torn between two opinions. The day before his marriage he rode down to Richmond, and galloped past Mrs. Fitzherbert's house, thus showing with whom his thoughts were. She saw him riding by; no doubt he intended that she should see him, and perhaps had she made any sign, even then, at the eleventh hour he would have broken off the match. But she made none. At the clubs bets were offered freely against the Prince's marriage coming off. The wagers were lost.

The Prince of Wales was married to the Princess Caroline of Brunswick in the Chapel Royal, St. James's, on the evening of April 8, 1795. The marriage was celebrated with the usual state and magnificence, and with every sign of public rejoicing. Though the Princess did not please her husband, she had already won the favour of the populace.

The Prince was in a highly nervous state all day, which increased as the hour of the ceremony drew near. On his way from Carlton House to the Chapel Royal, he said to his chamberlain, Lord Moira, who was sitting opposite to him in the coach, "It is no use, Moira, I shall never love any woman but Fitzherbert." To this the discreet Lord Moira made no reply. The Prince's appearance and conduct in the Chapel Royal were much commented upon. He scarcely looked at his bride, and appeared more like a victim going to the scaffold than a bridegroom to the altar. He was dazed and bewildered, and evidently under the influence of violent emotion. The Duke of Bedford, one of the two unmarried dukes who attended him to the altar, said he was under the influence of brandy. But this could hardly have been the only cause of his agitation, for he repeated the words coherently. If the Prince had been drinking it was in the hope that he might drown his conscience. Lord Holland comes nearer the truth when he says, "This manifest repugnance to the marriage was attributed by many at the time to remorse at the recollection of a similar ceremony which had

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passed between him and Mrs. Fitzherbert." [1] At one time the remembrance seemed to be too much for the Prince, for he rose from his knees in the midst of a prayer. The Archbishop paused: but the King stepped forward and whispered something to his son; the Prince knelt down again and the ceremony proceeded to the close without further interruption.

After the marriage the King and Queen held a drawing-room. Then the Royal Family supped in private, and later the newly-married pair drove to Carlton House. So ended this unhappy day.

The popular enthusiasm was great. The whole of London was illuminated, and the church bells were rung all over the kingdom. Even at Richmond, in the seclusion of Marble Hill, some echo of the popular rejoicings reached the ears of Mrs. Fitzherbert. She seems to have cherished a hope that the marriage would not take place, that even at the last hour the Prince would draw back and refuse to perjure himself. "Such implicit confidence and blind credulity did she place in him," says one, "that when Orlando Bridgeman, now Lord Bradford, went to inform Mrs. Fitzherbert of the Prince's marriage, she would not believe it until he swore that he himself had been present at the ceremony, and when he did so, she fainted away." [2]

[1] There are endless stories about what took place at the marriage. Lady Maria Stuart wrote that the Prince "looked like death." Wraxall, in his "Memoirs," writes, "that the Duke and Duchess of Dorset, and the Duchess (Isabella) of Rutland, all of whom were present at the ceremony, told him that . . . Dr. Moore, then Archbishop of Canterbury, when reading the matrimonial service in the Chapel Royal, gave unequivocal proofs of his apprehension that some engagement of a moral or religious nature antecedently contracted by the Prince might form a bar to the union which he was about to celebrate; for when he came to the words relative to 'either knowing of any impediment,' he laid down the book and looked earnestly for a second or two at the King, as well as at the royal bridegroom. The latter was much affected, and shed tears. Not content with this tacit allusion to the report, the Archbishop twice repeated the passage in which the Prince engages to live from that time in nuptial fidelity with his consort."

[2] Bury, *op. cit.*

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CHAPTER XVII

THE PRINCE'S WILL

(1796)

FOR some time after the marriage of the Prince of Wales to Princess Caroline of Brunswick, Mrs. Fitzherbert lived in retirement at Marble Hill. She suffered much in health and spirits; "her heart," she told a friend, "was almost broken." Her position as "wife yet no wife" was a difficult one truly, and had she followed her inclination, she would have continued in seclusion, or have left England for a time. But her retirement from the scene, as her friends and well-wishers reminded her, would be liable to misinterpretation. Why should she hide her head as one ashamed? After all she had done no wrong, the wrong had been done to her, and to withdraw altogether from the world would be to play into her enemies' hands, and give colour to the many baseless rumours circulated against her. So, upon reflection, she resolved to act in the same way as she had done after Fox's denial of her marriage in the House of Commons — to make no difference in her mode of life, to go about exactly as if nothing had taken place, and to let people say what they would. But it was easier in 1787 than in 1795; then she had her husband by her side, now she was alone. Nevertheless she braced herself to the effort, and the summer of the following year (1796) found her once more in London. Her house in Pall Mall had been given up, and in place of it she bought another, at the corner of Tilney Street and Park Lane. The entrance was in Tilney Street, but the house fronted Park Lane, separated from it by a tiny strip of garden. On the ground floor Mrs. Fitzherbert retained three rooms especially for her own use, a boudoir, bedroom, and dressing-room, the windows overlooking the Park.[1] The house was

[1] This house, No. 6, Tilney Street, Park Lane, continued to be the London residence of Mrs. Fitzherbert for over forty years, from 1796 until her death in

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admirably adapted for entertaining, and contained handsome reception rooms. These Mrs. Fitzherbert threw open to her friends, and they were soon filled. Very general sympathy was felt for her, combined with admiration for the quiet courage and dignity with which she bore her troubles. Many of her friends opined that she was well rid of the Prince. Her social position never stood better than in the year which followed the marriage of the Prince of Wales to Princess Caroline, not even in 1787. In one respect it stood higher than then, for though abandoned by the Prince, the Royal Family, including the King and Queen, were her friends. Lord Stourton gives an authoritative account of this period of Mrs. Fitzherbert's life. "One of her great friends and advisers, Lady Clermont, supported her on this trying occasion, and counselled her to rise above her feelings and to open her house to the town of London. She adopted this advice, much as it cost her to do so, and all the fashionable world, including all the royal dukes, attended her parties. Upon this, as upon all occasions, she was principally supported by the Duke of York, with whom, through life, she was always united in the most friendly and confidential relations." [1]

Meanwhile the married life of the Prince and Princess of Wales, which had begun badly, was going from bad to worse. The Prince started with aversion, the Princess with indifference. Toleration and forbearance might have prevented disaster, but these qualities neither of them possessed. None the less, for the first few months the Princess honestly tried to do her best to win the Prince's affections. Her best, it must be confessed, was not very good; she could not curb the levity of her temperament or the flippancy of her tongue. Her father had told her

1837. It then passed into the possession of her adopted daughter, the Hon. Mrs. George Dawson Damer, *née* Seymour, who lived there for many years. It afterwards became the property of the third Earl Manvers, and is now occupied by the Dowager Countess Manvers. By the courtesy of Lady Manvers I have seen the rooms that Mrs. Fitzherbert retained for her own use on the ground floor, with the windows fronting Park Lane. Except that the furniture is more modern, the rooms are unchanged from what they were in Mrs. Fitzherbert's day; a solitary relic remains in the shape of a jewel-box with the initials "G.R." In the dining-room there hangs a portrait of George IV. by Sir Thomas Lawrence and one of Mrs. Fitzherbert by Romney. The latter I reproduce in this book by the kind permission of Lord Manvers.

[1] Langdale, *op. cit.*

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"to observe everything and say nothing," but though she kept this saying constantly before her, she was always making remarks in public, which were in the very worst of taste. A great many of them were about Mrs. Fitzherbert, whom she habitually designated as "Fat — fair — forty." She frequently rallied the Prince on this subject, and, full of remorse as he was for his treatment of Mrs. Fitzherbert, the Princess's clumsy gaiety irritated him almost to madness. A few weeks after the marriage he asked Lord Malmesbury "what he thought of this sort of manners?" and bitterly reproached him for not having warned him about the Princess. Lord Malmesbury punctiliously replied that he had only received instructions from the King to conclude the marriage-treaty, and "such matters as manners" did not come within the scope of his commission. Yet even he began to reproach himself that he had not spoken in time, and to fear the worst. "It is impossible to foresee or conceive any comfort from this connection," he writes, "in which I lament very much having taken any share, however passive it was."[1] The differences between the ill-mated pair were aggravated by Lady Jersey, who deliberately sought in every way to poison the mind of the Prince against the Princess, and to prejudice the Princess still further against her husband. She repeated to the Prince all the indiscreet and unflattering remarks which Caroline was perpetually making about the person and conduct of her husband; on the other hand, she flaunted her *liaison* with the Prince before his wife's eyes. The Princess determined to remove her lady-in-waiting, but she was at first unable to do so, for Lady Jersey had been placed about her by Queen Charlotte. The Queen seems to have used Lady Jersey as a sort of spy to inform her of the shortcomings of her detested daughter-in-law. She threw over Lady Jersey the ægis of her own respectability; she frequently gave her private audiences, and afterwards set her down to play cards with the Princesses, her daughters — a proceeding at least peculiar, for the Queen prided herself on the immaculate virtue of her intimate circle. At last the Princess made a formal complaint to the King. The good old King took his niece's part, and Lady Jersey was removed, despite the jeers

[1] Malmesbury, *op. cit.*

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of the Queen, who declared it was "all nonsense," and the opposition of the Prince of Wales.

The Prince's sense of injury was increased by the debates in Parliament concerning his debts, and by what he considered to be the treachery of the King and the Government. He said he had been promised, if he married according to his father's wishes, that his debts would be discharged in full, and his income increased. The Duke of Clarence, speaking in the House of Lords, said: "He would not betray anything that passed in private conversation, but it was a matter of public notoriety that, before the marriage took place, it was stipulated that the Prince should, in the event of the union, be disencumbered of his debts." The result was very different. Pitt proposed that the Prince's income should be increased to £125,000 a year, exclusive of the revenues of the Duchy of Cornwall; that all expenses of the marriage should be defrayed, and £20,000 be granted for the additional furnishing of Carlton House. But, on the other hand, he allotted nothing for the payment of the Prince's debts, and proposed that £73,000 per annum should be deducted from the Prince's income by the Treasury until his debts were paid, thus bringing the Prince's available income down to a modest figure. Against this the Prince protested in vain. Parliament viewed both him and his debts with marked disapproval, and, at last, the Prince had to take what he could get. As the Duke of Clarence expressed it in the House of Lords, "His royal brother was in the situation of a man who, if he cannot get a particular haunch of venison, will take any other haunch rather than go without." But the Prince was not satisfied with his haunch; he again made an ostentatious parade of his poverty; he gave no entertainments; he reduced his household, and sulked both in public and private.

The unfortunate Princess was not to blame for the bad faith of the King and the Government, but it seems to have increased the Prince's resentment against her. His debts were not paid, and he was burdened with a wife whom he detested. Quarrels now became frequent, for the Princess had a high spirit, and was quick to retort. There were faults on both sides, but on the Prince's side the blame was the greater. Still, a semblance of union was kept up between the unhappy pair

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until the birth of the Princess Charlotte, which took place on January 7, 1796, exactly nine months after the marriage. The Prince was present at the birth, and he behaved with much good feeling. He received with satisfaction the congratulations of the great officers of state, who were in attendance, on the birth of an heiress presumptive to the throne. To the Prince the birth of this child meant something more than that; it meant his deliverance from an almost insupportable thraldom. In any case, the Prince would have disliked his wife, for they were quite unsuited to one another, but into his dislike there entered an element of physical repulsion which he could not (even if he would) overcome. The Prince had unequalled powers of self-deception; by this time he had persuaded himself that he had married the Princess of Wales, not because he wished to obtain the payment of his debts, but from patriotism and a sense of duty. He had sacrificed his own inclinations in order to provide for the direct succession to the throne. Now that purpose was accomplished, there was no need to continue the sacrifice, and he determined to escape from an intolerable situation without delay. He had been forced into this detested marriage, a victim of political expediency. In his eyes, it was merely a marriage of state, conferring no obligations on him beyond the one he had fulfilled.

The day after the birth of the Princess Charlotte the Prince was seized with one of his sudden and mysterious attacks of illness, brought on, no doubt, by the agitation and excitement consequent on the event. The attack, which was very violent, was treated as usual with profuse bleeding, which left him in a state of extreme weakness. The Prince was, or thought that he was, in danger of his life; and his thoughts flew back to the woman whom he loved more than any one else in the world, the woman whom he still regarded as his wife, Maria Fitzherbert. He was full of remorse for the wrong he had done her, the sin of it lay heavy on his soul, and his conscience prompted him to make her all possible amends. As soon as he had rallied a little, he drew up the following will in her favour, acknowledging her to be his wife, and leaving her everything he had in the world: —

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"*This is my last Will and Testament, written in my own hand, and executed by me, signed and sealed this* 10*th day of January, in the year of Our Lord* 1796.

"GEORGE P.[1]

Seal

"By this, my last Will and Testament, I now bequeathe, give, and settle at my death all my worldly property of every description, denomination and sort, personal and other, *to my Maria Fitzherbert, my Wife, the Wife of my heart and soul.*[2] Although by the laws of this country she could not avail herself publicly of that name, *still such she is in the eyes of Heaven, was, is, and ever will be such in mine.* And for the truth of which assertion I appeal to that Gracious God Whom I have here invoked to witness this my last disposition of my property, together with such explanations and declarations as are necessary for me to make, to enable me to quit this life with a clear conscience, and even without a sigh, except at the thought of leaving Her (and perhaps too without first receiving the blessing of her forgiveness), *who is my real and true Wife*, and who is dearer to me, even millions of times dearer to me, than that life I am now going to resign.

"As much has been said in the world relative to our separation, I take it upon myself now thus to declare that She (my Maria Fitzherbert) has been most infamously traduced; that her Person, her Heart, and her Mind are, and ever have been, from the first moment I knew her down to the present moment, as spotless, as unblemished, and as perfectly pure as anything can be that is human and mortal. Had it not been for the most infamous and basest of calumnies, my too credulous and susceptible heart, which knew no other feeling in life but for

[1] This will, the most interesting of the Fitzherbert papers, is the document marked on Langdale's list (*op. cit.* p. 87), "No. 4, Will written by the late King George IV." I am permitted to quote from it the above extracts (all that relates to Mrs. Fitzherbert) by gracious permission of his Majesty the King. This will, written in 1796, was given by the Prince of Wales to Mrs. Fitzherbert in 1799, and was always kept by her in a sealed packet. This packet was endorsed by her, "In case of my death, this packet not to be opened, upon any account whatever, but by the person I shall appoint by my will." In 1833 Mrs. Fitzherbert placed this packet, with other papers, at Coutts's Bank, where it remained until 1905, when it was removed, with the rest, to the private archives at Windsor.

[2] The italics are everywhere those of the Prince.

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Her, could never have been brought, even for a single instant, to harbour a thought of separating from such Worth; nor was such a suspicion (*O my God, as Thou well knowest!*) voluntarily sought by me. (But as entering further upon this point would involve others whom I pray Heaven to forgive, and lead to more than I am now able to write, I shall bury this in oblivion.)

"As to *Her* (I must, in justice to myself, so far say), I am most confident that had not similar vile, base, and scandalous wretches calumniated me to Her, and represented me in lights, and in a manner, I here aver, I have never deserved, she never could, or would, have persevered with such apparent cruelty and obduracy so foreign to the generous feelings of her soul, in rejecting for so great a length of time, every explanation, every submission, every step my tortured heart frequently tried, and was most ready and anxious, to make, and which finally drove me to despair.

"I now therefore, George Augustus Frederick, Prince of Wales, Duke of Cornwall, &c. &c. &c. do by this my last Will and Testament leave, will, and bequeathe after my death, all my Estates, all my Property, all my Personalities of whatever kind or sort to *my Maria Fitzherbert, who is my wife in the eyes of God, and who is, and ever will be, such in mine.* . . .[1]

"I desire to mention Miss Pigot,[2] who has been so uniformly kind and attentive in her conduct both to *my Maria Fitzherbert* as well as to me that it is quite impossible that we must not both of us feel most tenderly for her. I consequently did all that was in my power whilst I enjoyed life for her, by settling five hundred pounds annually on her during the natural course of my Life. I therefore do not doubt that *my Maria Fitzherbert* will try to make her easy and comfortable, unless she should first, through the interests of my Family, who are all acquainted with Miss Pigot, and with my regard for her, procure her a comfortable maintenance for the rest of her life as one of the

[1] Here follows a long, detailed description of the Prince's estates, property, and personalities, which included all the money at his bankers', certain land near Carlton House not the property of the Crown, all the furniture and pictures at Carlton House, all the plate, china, wines, books, pictures, "all my rings, trinkets, watches, boxes," all the land in or about the Pavilion at Brighton, all the property and furniture in the Pavilion and in the next house to it, all the horses and carriages, "in short, every article of property that is mine."

[2] Miss Pigot was the elderly lady who had lived with Mrs. Fitzherbert as *dame de compagnie* since her marriage to the Prince of Wales in 1785.

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MRS. FITZHERBERT

(*From a Painting by* RICHARD COSWAY, R.A., *by permission* Lady BLANCHE HAYGARTH)

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Housekeepers in one of the Royal Palaces and which will place her in an easy and respectable independence for the rest of her days.

"My Friend, the Earl of Moira, who I have ever most affectionately *loved*, will I trust not object, as the last testimony of his tried and long experienced regard, to the being my Executor, and to the seeing of this my Will most scrupulously adhered to. And that he together with [Admiral] Payne will guard and protect during their lives for the sake of their departed Friend *my beloved and adored Maria Fitzherbert, my Wife, in short my Second Self.*

"Having now I trust made all the restitution that is in my power to this most excellent Woman, there only remains for me to hope that when she is made acquainted with this entire and free disposition of my Property to Her, of this my candid avowal and of the just tribute I have paid to her merit, she will no longer withhold her forgiveness from me, accompanying it with her blessing. I assure her as I now do, that I shall die blessing her, *my only true and real Wife*, with my parting breath, and praying the Almighty and Most Merciful Being, to whom in this paper I have opened the innermost recesses of my heart and of my soul, to bless, protect, and guard her through this life, looking forward to the moment when our Souls in a better world may again be united, never more to part.

"I desire that I may be buried with as little pomp as possible, and that my constant companion, *the picture of my beloved Wife, my Maria Fitzherbert*, may be interred with me, suspended round my neck by a ribbon as I used to wear it when I lived, *and placed right upon my heart.*[1] I likewise wish and desire of *my adored Maria Fitzherbert* that, whenever she quits this life and is interred, my coffin should be taken up and placed next to hers, wherever she is to be buried. And, if she has no objection, that the two inward sides of the two coffins should be taken out, and the coffins should then be soldered together, as the late King's and Queen's were.[2] It is therefore *my* wish to be buried *not* in my Family Vault, but *anywhere*, as privately as possible, in order that my ashes may repose in quiet, until they are placed next to hers, or united with hers.

[1] We shall see that this request was literally carried out later.

[2] George II. and Queen Caroline were buried like this in Westminster Abbey.

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"Having thus closed the scene of a life most full of trouble and misery, I have now only to bid a last farewell *to Her who whilst She and I were One* did constitute the sole and only happiness of that life I am now going to resign. None have I enjoyed since we separated, and none would I ever expect to enjoy under any circumstances whatever, unless we were once more to be united. *To Her therefore my Maria, my Wife, my Life, my Soul* do I bid my last adieu.

"*Written and signed by me with my own hand.*

"GEORGE P.[1]

"CARLTON HOUSE, *Jany.* 10, 1796." Seal

Two days later the Prince added the following codicil: —

"In looking over the foregoing sheets I perceive I have omitted a circumstance of the utmost importance to my peace and quiet, and that is, that in the beginning of the last year or quite at the end of the preceding year, in consequence of an application from me to the King, through Lord Loughborough, that his Majesty would be so gracious (in case of my death before *my Maria Fitzherbert*) as to be pleased to continue to her for her Life the settlement I had for some years, before, made upon *Her* of *three thousand pounds annually* during the natural term of my Life. The Chancellor by the gracious command of the King wrote to me, in consequence, that his Majesty did not think such an event likely to happen, but in case that it should be so that he would be answerable for it, which claims my warmest acknowledgments, nor am I acquainted with language sufficiently energetick to express half what I feel to the King for this instance of his paternal and

[1] Yet it was of the man who could write this document that Thackeray declared: "I know of no sentiment he ever distinctly uttered. Documents are published under his name, but people wrote them — private letters, but people spelt them. He put a great George P. or George R. at the bottom of the page and fancied he had written the paper; some bookseller's clerk, some poor author, some *man* did the work; saw to the spelling, cleaned up the slovenly sentences and gave the lax maudlin slipslop a sort of consistency" ("The Four Georges"). Fortunately, apart from this document, which was written by the Prince alone, without help, there exists many private letters, published and unpublished, written by him with his own hand, which give the lie to this statement. Many of these letters are admirably written, perfectly correct in spelling and expressed with grace and felicity of diction. Except for a certain redundance of expression he was an admirable letter-writer.

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gracious goodness and consideration: if I did I should endeavour to express, though faintly, the gratefulness of my heart. My mind therefore is quite at rest on this circumstance, as I place the fullest and most ample reliance and faith in this, the King's most kind and gracious promise. Lord Loughborough's own letter (of which I received a copy written in Miss Pigot's hand, and which will be found amongst my papers) I gave to Miss Pigot to deliver to *my Maria Fitzherbert*, which I entertain not the slightest doubt but she did. In which event it is in the possession of *my Maria Fitzherbert.* But supposing that she [Miss Pigot] may not have done so, or that it may not have been in her power to do so, then it must be *in her's.* This was a circumstance which escaped my memory, and was of such serious import, and of so essential a nature to my feelings, that I should have deemed myself guilty of the most unpardonable and scandalous neglect, if, upon the revision of all I have here written, I had omitted it, especially as it tells so much for the honour, and is for the interest, of all parties. It also testifies to what I owe in gratitude (and which I trust my heart has never in any instance been deficient in) to the King as my Father.

"GEORGE P.

"CARLTON HOUSE, *Jany.* 12, 1796." Seal

"The whole of this Paper is written, signed and sealed by my own hand. So help me God.

"GEORGE P."

Seal

The question forces itself upon us: Was the Prince sincere when he wrote this will? There is no doubt that he was absolutely sincere. He wrote it at a time when he believed himself to be in danger of his life, and to right a wrong he had done to a woman whom he truly loved. Men do not lie to themselves at such a time. It was at once his confession and his *apologia;* a human document which reveals the man as he was, weak and emotional maybe, but very far removed from the heartless voluptuary his enemies have depicted him. He did not write it for publication, nor with the object of enticing Mrs. Fitzherbert to return to him. Not until three and a half years later (when she had already promised to return subject to the sanction of her Church) did the Prince show her this will. That he acted

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deliberately, and not on the impulse of the moment, in making it is shown by the fact that he also made two copies of it — one he gave to the King under his seal, and one to Lord Moira, whom he had appointed his executor. The original draft he kept himself — it was the one he later gave to Mrs. Fitzherbert. The document gains a special significance from the date on which it was written, three days after the birth of the heiress presumptive to the throne. In the light of subsequent events it would seem to have been the first step the Prince took to escape from a condition of affairs that had become intolerable to him.

The second step was not long in coming. The Princess Charlotte was christened on February 11, 1796, and the Princess of Wales was declared to be convalescent. The Prince of Wales removed from Carlton House to Windsor Castle, and a few weeks later came the inevitable separation. The Princess has herself given the following account of what happened to a friend: "Well, after I lay in — *je vous jure* 'tis true, upon my honour, upon my soul 'tis true — I receive a message through Lord Cholmondeley to tell me I never was to have de great honour of inhabiting de same room wid my husband again. I said: 'Very well, but as my memory was very short, I begged to have dis polite message in writing from him.' I had it, and was free."[1] The letter the Prince wrote to his wife on this occasion has been often quoted, but we repeat it here.

"MADAM, — As Lord Cholmondeley informs me that you wish I would define, in writing, the terms upon which we are to live, I shall endeavour to explain myself on that head, with as much clearness, and with as much propriety as the nature of the subject will admit. Our inclinations are not in our power, nor should either of us be held answerable to the other, because nature has not made us suitable to each other. Tranquil and comfortable society is, however, in our power; let our intercourse, therefore, be restricted to that, and I will distinctly subscribe to the condition which you required through Lady Cholmondeley, that even in the event of any accident happening to my daughter (which I trust Providence in its mercy will avert), I shall not infringe the terms of the restriction by proposing, at any period, a connection of a more particular nature. I

[1] Bury, *op. cit.*

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shall now finally close this disagreeable correspondence, trusting that, as we have completely explained ourselves to each other, the rest of our lives will be passed in uninterrupted tranquillity. I am, Madam, with great truth, very sincerely yours,

"GEORGE P.

"WINDSOR CASTLE, *April* 30, 1796."

The Princess waited a week before replying to this letter, and then she wrote in French, agreeing to her husband's terms. But she said "the credit of this arrangement belongs to you alone," and she declared that it would be her duty to give "an example of patience and resignation under every trial," a declaration which was no more fulfilled than her husband's hope that "the rest of our lives may be passed in uninterrupted tranquillity."

The Princess, whose pride was much wounded by this cavalier treatment, first thought of returning to Brunswick to her parents, and then, for she was a woman of many moods, of appealing to the King to bring about a reconciliation. The King did make the attempt, but he found that the Prince disliked his wife too intensely to listen to any proposal on the subject. The Princess could not be expected to understand that she inspired her husband with positive disgust; she did not entertain the same feeling towards him, though she did not like him. She had a quick temper and a ready tongue; she did not mean half what she said; she spoke in haste and repented at leisure, and she thought that the Prince was like her. Though she had agreed to the separation, she could not believe that the estrangement would be permanent. For a time she kept a suite of rooms at Carlton House as a *pied à terre*, but the Prince would not cross the threshold of his palace while she was there, so at last she retired to a villa at Charlton near Blackheath. She was allowed free access to her daughter, and attended the drawing-rooms at St. James's and other Court ceremonies. The King treated her with unvarying kindness and respect, and public feeling was wholly on her side; in fact she bid fair to become the idol of the populace. Whenever the Princess appeared in public she was cheered to the echo, and she eagerly welcomed these popular demonstrations in her favour. It was natural for her to do so, but indiscreet, as it added to her husband's dislike an element of jealousy.

So matters continued for two years, and still the Princess

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did not give up all hope of a reconciliation, the more so as for a long time the Prince had showed unmistakable signs of having wearied of Lady Jersey. The Princess persisted in regarding Lady Jersey as the cause of her troubles, whereas she was only an incident in them. The Prince's manner towards his former favourite was cold and distant, and he avoided her upon every possible occasion; indeed he had never been intimate with her since his separation from the Princess of Wales. There was no open rupture, for Lady Jersey obstinately refused to take any hint, however broad, of the Prince's desire to be rid of her; he on his part was unwilling, or afraid, to quarrel publicly with her. The Prince was much embarrassed by the persistence of the lady, and he employed one of his friends, Edward Jerningham, "The Poet," to give her a strong hint to leave him alone. Edward Jerningham went to see Lady Jersey, whom he found "very artful." He writes: —

"Lady Jersey is now in the Transit of Venus. It was very evident her reign was drawing to its Period. I believe I have mentioned this circumstance before, but the singularity attending the progression of this affair is that the Lady will not acknowledge any difference or diminution of regard on *his* side. This embarrasses the Prince exceedingly, as he wishes to let her down gently, and to separate amicably, which he thinks cannot be done if he should dismiss her in town, and unequivocally. I have given her intimations and broad suggestions which she will not understand, or at least does not seem to understand." [1]

Though Lady Jersey refused to admit it, she must have known in her heart that her day was over. The Prince made no secret that he was weary of her. She had appealed wholly to his senses, and his senses were surfeited. The Princess of Wales, who from afar watched every movement of her husband with keen interest, rejoiced greatly at the downfall of her enemy, but she soon discovered that she would not be the gainer. The Prince's heart had long since gone back to the only woman he ever loved, the woman who still regarded herself as his wife, Maria Fitzherbert.

[1] Letter of Mr. Edward Jerningham to the Hon. Lady Jerningham (1798). "Jerningham Letters."

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... The Princess persisted in ... by
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Jersey is now in the Transit of Venus. It was very ... was leaving to its Period. I believe I have ... this or instances before, but the slow phrase ... the progression of this Star is that the Lady will not ... advance or demonstration of regard on *his* side ... Prince proceedingly, as he wishes to keep ... gentle, or to separate amicably, which he thinks cannot ... dismiss her in town, an Invective by. I ... mixed ... and strong sentiments which she ... will not put to the test, does not seem to understand."[1]

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[1] Letter ... Lady Jersey, ... to the Hon. Lady Jerning[ham] (1786). "Jerningham Letters."

Mrs Fitzherbert

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CHAPTER XVIII

REUNION

(1796–1800)

THE Prince of Wales separated from Mrs. Fitzherbert in June 1794; in April 1795 he married the Princess of Wales; in April 1796 he separated from her; in June 1796 he was eagerly trying to renew marital relations with Mrs. Fitzherbert. Since their parting, Mrs. Fitzherbert had avoided the Prince in every possible way. She did not answer his letters, she did not heed his messages, and she went to no entertainment, public or private, where he was likely to be present. She regarded the separation as complete. By his second union he had placed, she considered, an insuperable barrier between them. She knew, of course, for the story was common property, of the unhappiness of his married life. For the Princess of Wales she felt nothing but compassion. She knew also of the Prince's coolness to Lady Jersey, but she made no sign to remind him of her existence. She kept a brave face to the world, and tried to live her life as though nothing had happened. Except for a month or two in the season she was little in London; she had given up Brighton, and disposed of the lease of Marble Hill. The greater part of the year she spent in comparative retirement at a villa she had bought at Castle Hill, Ealing. There she sought, if not happiness, peace.

But peace was not to be her lot. No sooner had the Prince separated from the Princess of Wales, than he began to make overtures to Mrs. Fitzherbert, sending her messages through friends and so forth. To these she turned a deaf ear, but her reticence made no difference to the Prince. She soon found herself again exposed to difficulties and embarrassments from his constant pursuit. He became definite in his demands, and first through the medium of friends, and then directly, he eagerly pressed her to resume their former relations. At first

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she scouted the idea. "The link once broken could never be rejoined," she said, but the Prince refused to take "No" for an answer. Again he wrote her letters of great length — pages and pages full of self-reproach and passionate pleading for her to return to him. He was now alone. He had separated from the Princess, and broken with Lady Jersey. He pleaded his lonely position; he was full of remorse for the past, full of promises for the future. There was nothing he would not do if his "dear wife" would only listen to his prayer. He declared his ill-treatment of her was a brief madness, and if she would only take him back it would be the object of his life to atone for the past. He meant it in all sincerity. Still she would not listen.

When the Princess of Wales heard of this — she heard of everything connected with her husband, and commented freely; it was one of her indiscretions — she said to a friend of the Prince, "She hoped *her husband* would not feel *her* any impediment to the reconciliation he was so desirous for." Shortly after, this gentleman, who was one of the Prince's household, told her he had given the "message" to the Prince, who exclaimed, "Did she say so? Indeed she is very good-natured." No doubt the "message" was repeated to Mrs. Fitzherbert with additions. Before long the Princess heard that she was being represented as taking an active part in bringing the Prince and Mrs. Fitzherbert together again, and the Prince had commented upon her "message" as one more proof of her indelicacy. "Indelicacy, indeed!" she exclaimed, "and I wonder who could say such a thing, or suppose I could ever have thought it? All I said was, that I hoped *I* did not stand in the way of his happiness." This denial was somewhat equivocal, especially when it is remembered that the Princess was always talking about Mrs. Fitzherbert, and her secret marriage to the Prince of Wales. From the beginning she had shown great inquisitiveness on this subject, which it would have been more dignified for her to have ignored. But the Princess's curiosity was not dictated by malice, for she had always a kindly feeling for the "morganatic wife," whom she considered to have been much ill-treated (like herself) by the Prince.

So matters went on for nearly three years, the Prince growing ever more passionate in his entreaties to Mrs. Fitzherbert to

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rejoin him. He declared she was the only one who could save him from himself, and she, the woman who loved him, began to waver. She still regarded herself as the Prince's wife, and a reconciliation, after his profession of penitence and sorrow, was the logical consequence of such reasoning. In 1799 she seems at last to have given a half-promise, through Admiral Payne, to rejoin the Prince; but upon reflection she withdrew it. This vacillation brought the Prince to a state bordering on desperation. On June 13, 1799, when staying at Windsor Castle, he wrote her a letter, which had the nature of an ultimatum. He reproached her with having withdrawn her promise; he reminded her of her marriage vows (inconsistently enough, for it was he who had broken them); he declared that he could no longer endure the misery of the last five years, and he vowed that if she still refused a reconciliation he would publicly proclaim his marriage with her, be the consequences what they might. It was in this letter that the Prince made the declaration (already quoted) concerning witnesses to his marriage.

"Think not," said he, "that prayer or any advice whatever will make me delay my purpose, or forswear my oath. Thank God, my witnesses are living — your uncle, and your brother, besides Harris, who I shall call upon as having been informed by me of every, even the *minutest*, circumstances of our marriage."

This letter the Prince sent by the hand of the Duke of Cumberland, and demanded an immediate answer. It threw Mrs. Fitzherbert into a state of great anxiety and alarm. She knew that the Prince, if driven to despair, was capable of doing any foolish thing, and of all foolish things the public declaration of his marriage with her at this juncture would be the worst. To the Prince it would probably mean ruin; he had already made himself intensely unpopular by his separation from the Princess of Wales. The King was on the side of his daughter-in-law, the people adored her, and the Government was hostile to the Prince. If he now publicly avowed his previous marriage to a Roman Catholic, that marriage, whether legal or illegal, would be regarded as an additional wrong to the Princess of Wales, and public opinion would not brook the scandal. It might be seized upon as a pretext to deprive the Prince of his

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succession to the throne, and in any event, could not fail to weaken his title. Much though Mrs. Fitzherbert desired that the truth concerning her marriage should be made known, she did not desire it at the cost of the Prince's ruin. And there were others involved as well. The clergyman was dead, but her uncle and her brother who had acted as witnesses to the ceremony were living, and might be subjected to the penalties of *premunire* — banishment and confiscation of property. It may be doubted if public opinion would have tolerated these penalties being enforced; but to Mrs. Fitzherbert's excited imagination, she already saw her relatives ruined and sent out of the country. So far as her brother, Jack Smythe, was concerned, this would not have mattered much; he had no property to be confiscated — he was a ne'er-do-well, always worrying his sister for money, and she and the country would be well rid of him. But her uncle, Mr. Errington, was a man of honour and integrity, the owner of large property and an ancient name. She could not bear to think of the possibilty of bringing sorrow on his grey hairs, and ruin and disgrace. So she temporised with the Prince. She wrote to him, promising to reconsider the matter, and holding out a hope that she would meet his wishes if he would promise to do nothing until he heard from her again. With this answer the Prince was fain to be satisfied, but he warned her that he would not wait long.

Mrs. Fitzherbert's position was one of great difficulty. Her heart cried one way and her better judgment the other. The Prince's reasoning regarding her marriage vows, illogical though it was, carried great weight with her. She had promised to take him "for better for worse," and though it had been very much for worse, she was not a woman to set her marriage vows lightly aside. She regarded herself as the Prince's true wife by the law of her Church. Still, by the law of the land, she remembered that the Prince of Wales was married to the Princess Caroline, who was legally and beyond all doubt the Princess of Wales; the mother of his child. In law Mrs. Fitzherbert was nothing more to him than if she had been his mistress, and her soul revolted at such a position. While she was thus hesitating, every influence was brought to bear on her to return to the Prince. Her own family were strongly in favour of a reconciliation. Several members of the royal family, including all the

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royal dukes, and the Princesses Augusta and Mary, urged her to rejoin the Prince, and even said it was her duty to do so. Mrs. Fitzherbert was also privately assured of the Queen's countenance and support. (The Queen, indeed, hated the Princess of Wales so much that she would have done anything against her.)

But the approval of the Queen and royal family and of her relatives and friends, was not enough to satisfy Mrs. Fitzherbert in a matter where her conscience was concerned. The subsequent marriage of the Prince had made the question of her return to him one of extreme difficulty; even her spiritual director hesitated to pronounce an opinion upon it. So, after much consideration, Mrs. Fitzherbert resolved to submit the whole case to the judgment of the highest authorities of her Church, and to be guided by their decision. She wrote to the Prince and told him that she must first appeal to Rome, and the Prince, however impatient he might be at this further delay, had again to submit.

But they appear to have met about this time, and local tradition has it that the first meeting between the Prince of Wales and Mrs. Fitzherbert, after their separation in 1794, took place at Kempshott, in Hampshire. Mrs. Fitzherbert went down to Red Rice to consult her uncle, Mr. Errington, and the Prince followed her to Kempshott hard by. A dinner was arranged, at which they were to discuss the terms of their reconciliation, and Mrs. Fitzherbert drove over to Kempshott from Red Rice. As it was thought that a *tête-à-tête* dinner would be awkward, Sir Henry Rycroft, who owned Kempshott, and was a friend of both of them, was invited to make a third. One would think that the *diner à trois* must have been still more awkward, especially for Sir Henry. But as he was there *pour les convenances*, he probably knew when to efface himself judiciously.[1]

Shortly after this meeting the Reverend William Nassau, one of the priests of the Roman Catholic church in Warwick Street, the church which Mrs. Fitzherbert attended in London, was commissioned by her to make a special journey to Rome in order to lay her case before the Holy See. It was understood

[1] I am indebted to Lady Dorothea Rycroft for this story.

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that if permission were granted to her, she would rejoin the Prince of Wales; but if it were refused, she determined to quit England and live abroad; the only way in which she could escape his importunities. The mission to Rome took some time, and meanwhile Mrs. Fitzherbert retired to a small watering-place in Wales, having first obtained from the Prince a promise that he would not follow her there.

At last, Father Nassau returned, and brought with him a Papal Brief, sealed with the seal of the Fisherman. This document declared that the Supreme Pontiff had considered the case of Maria Fitzherbert. He pronounced her to be the wife of the Prince of Wales according to the law of the Church; she was, therefore, free to rejoin her husband if he were truly penitent for his sins and sincere in his promises of amendment. The decision of Rome was intended for Mrs. Fitzherbert's satisfaction alone; it was therefore kept a secret, as the marriage had always been. The Prince had nothing to do with the appeal, though he availed himself of the decision. Nothing would have induced him to admit that he had consented to Rome arbitrating on his behalf. He knew that it would affront beyond measure the Protestant feeling in the country.

The mission to Rome and the decision of the Papal Court on Mrs. Fitzherbert's case must have taken place some time between June 1799 and the end of the year. They were privately reconciled soon after the Brief was received, for in December we find the Prince of Wales writing to her from Carlton House in his usual strain of devotion, and sending her a copy of the will which he had made in her favour nearly four years before.

". . . As to the Paper I have put unto your hands," he writes, "it was with no view of distressing your feelings that I entrusted it to you. That I wished you to be acquainted with the contents I most certainly did, and next to the relief I felt when I had finished it, and which certainly did restore me in a manner to life after a precarious and most dangerous illness, the greatest relief to my heart would be the knowing that you had perused it. . . . Think not, my Angel, that there is one unkind expression about you contained in the whole of it, so, believe me, nothing could be further from the writer's heart and mind both then and now (though it is now within a few

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MRS. FITZHERBERT'S HOUSE IN TILNEY STREET

(*As seen from Park Lane*)

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days of four years since it was written), and indeed at all times, than a thought of that nature. How I have ever loved and adored you God only knows, and how I do *now* He also knows, and *you* cannot pretend to be ignorant of or disbelieve. I have no secrets from *you*. . . ." [1]

Though Mrs. Fitzherbert, as soon as she received permission from Rome, became reconciled to the Prince, she did not publicly rejoin him until some time later.[2] At first they only met in private, but soon after the New Year (1800) they began to appear in public together. These meetings occasioned much comment, but they prepared men's minds for the formal reconciliation that was to follow. Lady Jerningham, a Roman Catholic, wrote: "The affair of Mrs. Fitzherbert and the Prince becomes very incomprehensible; it is a fact that he meets her whenever he can, and a conversation ensues that takes them both out of the company. On Saturday, Lady Kenmare tells me, that Mrs. Fitzherbert, Mrs. Butler, and the Prince were in a high box all night in conversation; the Princess at the Opera and also Lady Jersey. I comprehend it no longer, for I had thought Mrs. Fitzherbert a woman of principle." [3]

But before long the bewilderment of Lady Jerningham and Mrs. Fitzherbert's other Roman Catholic friends ceased. Her director saw to that. They were given to understand the nature of the communication from Rome, and there was nothing more to be said. By every Roman Catholic in the kingdom, who knew the circumstances, she was regarded as the canonical wife of the Prince of Wales.

In June 1800 Mrs. Fitzherbert was formally and openly reconciled to the Prince. On an appointed day she gave a "public breakfast" at her house in Tilney Street "to meet his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales," and to it she invited all her friends, who came in great numbers. There were white roses everywhere; the rooms and the tables were decorated

[1] Extract from a Letter of H.R.H. the Prince of Wales to Mrs. Fitzherbert, dated Carlton House, December 11, 1799.

[2] Among the many propitiatory offerings the Prince sent Mrs. Fitzherbert at this time was a small gold bracelet, to which was attached a locket of bloodstone and turquoise. Inside the locket was a painting of his right eye, said to be by Cosway, and the words *Rejoindre ou Mourir* were engraved on the bracelet. This trinket is now in the possession of Lady Horatia Erskine.

[3] "Jerningham Letters," *op. cit.*

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with them, and the hostess carried a bouquet of the same flowers. This breakfast proclaimed to the fashionable world of London that her relations with the Prince were resumed on the old footing. Mrs. Fitzherbert afterwards told Lord Stourton "she hardly knew how she could summon up resolution to pass that severe ordeal, but she thanked God she had the courage to do so." It certainly required courage, and was perhaps the best way of letting her friends know that she and the Prince were reconciled — a way in keeping with her frank and open nature. But the occasion was hardly one for rejoicing, and, under the circumstances, "a public breakfast" seems in doubtful taste.[1]

The Prince now, as before, let it be known that Mrs. Fitzherbert should always be invited to any private entertainment which he honoured with his presence, and he quitted two parties abruptly because his wishes had not been complied with. As before, he treated her in public with the most ceremonious respect. Miss Cornelia Knight writes that in November 1800 she was present at a concert at Lady Macartney's, "where I saw the Prince of Wales handing in Mrs. Fitzherbert with all the respect imaginable."[2]

The Prince also, accompanied by Mrs. Fitzherbert, paid visits during the autumn and winter (1800–1801) to members of her family, who welcomed him back to their circle with open arms. He was at Kempshott in November, and at Red Rice. In December with Mrs. Fitzherbert he paid a visit to Sir Carnaby and Lady Haggerston (her brother-in-law and sister) at Grantham. He hunted with the Belvoir hounds, and while at Grantham he paid a visit to his great friend, Mary Isabella, the widowed Duchess of Rutland, who was then living at Belvoir Castle with her son the Duke, a minor. The following letter refers to that visit: —

"GRANTHAM, *Dec.* 28, 1800.

"MY DEAREST DUCHESS, — I cannot help trespassing on your well-known goodness to entreat of you to express to the

[1] Lady Jerningham writes of this breakfast (June 16, 1800): "Yesterday I was dreadfully ill all day, a *bad* cold, and I believe a storm in the air. It has dispensed me with going to Mrs. Fitzherbert's Breakfast this morning. George [Jerningham] and his wife are gone with the Chevalier [Jerningham] and the Kenmares." — "Jerningham Letters."

[2] "Autobiography of Miss Cornelia Knight, late companion of the Princess Charlotte of Wales." London, 1861.

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Duke how sorry I am not to be able to come over to Belvoir to-day, having been much indisposed yesterday and continuing far from well to-day. However, as I understand the Hounds hunt at Barrowby to-morrow, I trust I shall be sufficiently stout to meet them at that cover, as it lays so contiguous to this place, and afterwards to proceed to Belvoir. What I feel most is the disappointment of not enjoying so much of your society as I should have done by passing a day more in the house with *you*. You know me too well, my dearest Friend, to make it necessary for me to add anything more, except how truly I am at all times and under all circumstances, ever your most sincere and attached Friend,

"GEORGE P.

"*P.S.* — Mrs. Fitz. unites with me in everything, my dearest Duchess, that is most kind to you." [1]

Mrs. Fitzherbert's reconciliation to the Prince of Wales was now generally recognised, and the peculiar situation was accepted by their friends with what grace they could muster. Those who objected ceased to be their friends.

It cannot be said that Mrs. Fitzherbert acted precipitately in this matter, or without due consideration. She did not return to the Prince until four years after he had separated from the Princess of Wales, until long after that separation, which she had done nothing to bring about, was an accomplished fact. Even then she only yielded after she had consulted the highest authorities of her Church. She went back to the Prince because she loved him, and because she believed herself to be his wife; there was no other inducement. She was in her forty-fifth year, and, after all she had gone through, she might reasonably have wished for repose; with the Prince, as she well knew, repose was impossible. While she was living apart from him, she had an assured and comfortable income, and she was regarded with respect by all classes of the community. By rejoining the Prince she gained no worldly advantage, she sacrificed her tranquillity, and to some extent her dignity; she made herself a mark for public scandal, and put herself once

[1] The Duke of Rutland has kindly permitted me to copy this letter (from the original at Belvoir) for the purpose of publication in this book.

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more in an equivocal position — this time even more equivocal than before, for the Prince by the law of the land was married to another woman of equal birth, who legally shared his rank and dignity, and who had borne him a child. That he had ill-treated the Princess, neglected her, and separated from her, only aggravated the situation. Mrs. Fitzherbert was aware how strongly public feeling ran in favour of the Princess of Wales. She knew that if she openly rejoined the Prince without publishing her authority for doing so she would lay her conduct open to the worst constructions. Nevertheless she did not shrink from occupying a position which has well been described as "one of the most extraordinary, in which any woman was ever placed." She listened, in spite of her better judgment, to the pleading of the Prince of Wales, who represented himself to be the victim of a cruel state policy, which had forced him into a loveless union with a Princess who was odious to him. From this point of view there was something to be said in excuse of the Prince. But there was also the Princess to be considered. Mrs. Fitzherbert could not see that she was doing her a wrong; she reasoned that the Princess did not love the Prince; he could not love her, and nothing would induce him to return to her, whether Mrs. Fitzherbert were reconciled to him or not. She wished the Princess no harm; she was merely availing herself of the prior claim which the Church told her she possessed to the Prince's hand and bed.

Mrs. Fitzherbert insisted that all acquaintance between the Prince and Lady Jersey should be completely broken off before she received him back again. This the Prince promised, for he had rarely seen her since his separation from the Princess of Wales, and had done everything in his power, short of absolute rudeness, to avoid her. But Lady Jersey, though she knew her day was over, was not easily suppressed. Lady Jerningham writes an amusing account of Lady Jersey's behaviour towards the Prince at the Duchess of Devonshire's breakfast at Chiswick, which took place about a month after the "reconciliation breakfast" of Mrs. Fitzherbert.

"We got there a little after three," writes Lady Jerningham, "and were told that the Duchess was in the pleasure ground. We accordingly found her sitting with Mrs. Fitzherbert by an urn. Several bands of musick were very well placed in the

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garden, so that when you were out of hearing of one band you began to catch the notes of another. Thus harmony always met your ears. This sort of continued concert has always a most pleasant effect upon my nerves. There was a Temple which was destin'd to the Prince's entertainment, and was very prettily decorated with flowers. There were about twenty covers, and when we understood that the Duchess and all these fine people were in their Temple, we Goths, we took possession of the House, where we found in every room a table spread with cold meat, fruit, ice, and all sorts of wine. It is a fine house, and there are most delightful pictures in it. After the eating and quaffing was over, the young Ladies danced on the green. . . . The Prince was *en polisson*, a brown dress, round hat, and a brown wig. He stood almost the whole time by his band, and Dr. Burney, ordering different pieces of musick. Lady Jersey was coasting round the spot where he stood, with her daughters, Lady Anne Lambton and Lady Elizabeth Villiers (who has not yet been presented, and appears to be quite a girl). The Prince was quite annoyed with her, and eyed her askance; but she is resolved to plague him; she professes it to be her resolution." [1]

At this time Lady Jersey was perhaps the most hated and abused woman in England. She had earned a most unenviable notoriety, and when the Prince threw her over, all classes rejoiced at her downfall. She was generally supposed to have been the cause of the separation between the Prince and Princess of Wales. Undoubtedly she embittered their relations, and hastened the crisis, but the separation between a pair so ill-assorted would have come to pass in any case. When Lady Jersey had disappeared, and Mrs. Fitzherbert came back again into the public gaze, some share of the popular execration was directed against the latter. By the ignorant public she was supposed to have taken the place of the discarded mistress, and the renewal of the intimacy between her and the Prince excited great dissatisfaction. Some of this found expression in the

[1] "Jerningham Letters," Monday, July 7, 1800. One of the last glimpses we get of Lady Jersey is to be found in these letters. By 1813 she was quite deserted by all her admirers, and we find her at Middleton declaring that she cared for "the details of country life and nothing else." She died at Cheltenham, July 25, 1821, predeceasing by a few weeks only her rival, Queen Caroline.

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press, which in those days was extremely free in dealing with the private affairs of royal personages. It was pointed out that previously to the marriage of the Prince and Princess of Wales, a final separation had been arranged between the Prince and Mrs. Fitzherbert, and in consideration of this separation a handsome pension was guaranteed to the lady; by accepting the pension Mrs. Fitzherbert accepted the situation, and agreed to leave the field clear for the Princess. By now returning to the Prince she was doing the Princess a great wrong, and by still keeping her pension she was breaking faith with the public. On the surface this argument was plausible enough, but it must be remembered that those who most blamed her action at this juncture were not aware of the tie which bound her to the Prince. They were unaware also that she returned to him with the sanction of her Church, with the approval of many members of the royal family, and at the advice of many of her relatives and friends. Among her friends, however, there were some found to cavil, and there is no doubt that Mrs. Fitzherbert, by returning to the Prince after his marriage to the Princess of Wales, lost not only her popularity, but to some extent the respect which had been hitherto accorded to her.

The question of right or wrong in this case is one of extraordinary difficulty. Even when we admit that Mrs. Fitzherbert was the canonical wife, the Princess of Wales was the legal consort of the Prince of Wales, and she had rights which should have been respected. It may be pleaded that in ignoring the Princess's rights Mrs. Fitzherbert was only following the dictates of her heart and her conscience; the fact remains that by ignoring them she made a grievous mistake. She made two great mistakes in her life, the first when she married the Prince of Wales in defiance of the law; the second when she went back to him in 1800. The latter mistake was the greater of the two. But it is easy to criticise the conduct of individuals in the light of subsequent events, and perhaps even if Mrs. Fitzherbert had known what the future had in store for her, it would have made no difference. She bought a few more years of happiness, and to her, maybe, they were worth the price she afterwards paid for them in suffering and tears.

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CHAPTER XIX

HAPPY YEARS

(1800–1804)

MRS. FITZHERBERT once told Lord Stourton that "the next eight years were the happiest of her connection with the Prince" (that is the years which followed their reconciliation in 1800). "She used to say that they were extremely poor, but as merry as crickets." Lord Stourton adds, "As a proof of their poverty she told me that once on their returning to Brighton from London they mustered their common means and could not raise £5 between them. Upon this, or some such occasion, she related to me that an old and faithful servant endeavoured to force them to accept £60, which he said he had accumulated in the service of the best of masters and mistresses." The happy relations which existed between the Prince and his dependants have been already mentioned. As to Mrs. Fitzherbert, the devotion of her servants was boundless; they remained with her for years, and grew grey in her service.

The expression "extremely poor" must be taken as relative. The Prince's income was burdened with the debts which had embarrassed him in the past, and were still accumulating in the present, to embarrass him in the future. Even so, he always found money for his pleasures, and for the extensive alterations which he was continually carrying out at Carlton House and the Pavilion. Mrs. Fitzherbert had her own jointure, and the annuity guaranteed to her at the time of her separation from the Prince. As she had now rejoined him, that annuity was probably not paid regularly, but whenever she was in money difficulties the Prince was always ready to help her out of them. In the years that immediately followed their reconciliation the Prince's devotion seemed to grow greater every day. Everything he had was at her disposal, and had Mrs. Fitzherbert been an interested person (which

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she was not), she might have laid up a handsome fortune against the inevitable day when the fickle Prince should once more change. She did not at this time contemplate the possibility of any change in his affections, for they lived together in unbroken harmony, delighted to be with one another again. Only the shadow of the Prince's unfortunate political marriage fell across the sunshine of their lives. Mrs. Fitzherbert carefully kept a judicious silence on this unhappy subject, and abstained from the slightest allusion to it. The Prince was not so reticent. "The greatest interruptions to their happiness at that period," Mrs. Fitzherbert told Lord Stourton, "were his bitter and passionate regrets, and self-accusations for his conduct, which she always met by saying, 'We must look to the present and the future, and not think of the past.'"

Mrs. Fitzherbert continued on terms of friendship and intimacy with the royal family, especially with the Prince's brothers, all of whom, except the Duke of Cumberland, were frequent visitors at her house. The Duke of Clarence, who had taken her part all through the unhappy quarrel brought about by Lady Jersey, had the warmest regard for her, and frequently consulted her on delicate matters connected with his numerous family. But the Duke of York remained above all others her best friend. "Her communications through life were even more confidential with the Duke of York than with the Duke of Clarence, and these communications continued without interruption to the day of his death. Messages to George III. at one time and to the Queen at another were sent through this friendly medium. Their letters to each other were of the most confidential kind. The Duke frequently came to her house, day after day, passing many hours in her company, and entering with her into all the circumstances of the times. Their agreement with each other was never to give up their authorities, with the exception, which she always made, that she would observe no secrets to the disadvantage of the Prince; only she promised never, even to him, to divulge the source whence she derived her information. This she strictly observed, though she was sometimes scolded by the Duke for giving him information without any authority.

"She owed much of the contentment of her life to the open manner in which she was able, through such a channel, to

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communicate with the King and Queen, on occasions of delicacy, to guide her conduct. Such correspondence was always maintained by verbal messages. She always endeavoured to avoid interfering in politics; but at one time, she furthered the earnest wish of the Father to prevent the Son from attending at a Newmarket meeting. At another time, when the greatest coolness subsisted between the Father and the Son, who was not even spoken to at court, she obtained from the King (knowing how much the Prince suffered from this extreme coolness) a promise to speak with kindness to the Prince, who returned from court in the highest spirits, unaware of the person to whom he was indebted."[1]

With the Duke of Kent her relations were also very friendly. This Prince had lived a great deal abroad. He had been educated in Germany and Switzerland, a victim to the mistaken notions of the King, who did not think an English education was good for an English Prince. He was then sent to various places in the colonies, and given a very inadequate allowance, with the result that he, through no fault of his own, became financially embarrassed. He returned to England in 1799, and renewed his acquaintance with Mrs. Fitzherbert. She gave him a warm welcome home, which contrasted with the coldness and indifference he met with from the King and Queen. The Duke was of a generous and an affectionate disposition, and he never forgot her kindness. Not only did he frequently visit her, but he entered into a correspondence with her, as friendly, if not so intimate, as that which she conducted with the Duke of York.[2]

Soon after Mrs. Fitzherbert's reconciliation to the Prince of Wales, her house in Tilney Street was enlarged by the addition of the one next it. The two houses were thrown into one, and made a spacious mansion, more adapted to her changed requirements. She gave up her villa at Castle Hill, Ealing,

[1] Langdale, *op. cit.*

[2] The correspondence between Mrs. Fitzherbert and the Duke of York (which touched upon political as well as family matters) was destroyed after his death. She preserved many of the Duke of Kent's letters; they were found among her papers. I am permitted by His Majesty the King to quote from this collection sundry letters of the Duke of Kent which will be found in this book. They will serve to show the respect in which Mrs. Fitzherbert was held, not only by the Duke, but by all the royal family.

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for it was associated with the saddest period of her life, and the Duke of Kent took over the remainder of the lease. In its place she took East End House, Parson's Green, Fulham. Mrs. Fitzherbert altered this house considerably, and improved the garden. Here she resided, off and on, for several years.[1]

Even during these years, which Mrs. Fitzherbert described as the happiest of her life with the Prince, their domestic peace and happiness was continually broken by difficulties which arose out of the Prince's political and domestic affairs. In 1801 the King again fell alarmingly ill, and symptoms of the old malady showed themselves. Dr. Willis was called in, but at first even his skill availed nothing, and the King's reason and life were declared to be in danger. This state of affairs naturally brought the Prince of Wales forward, and the Regency question was once more in the air. The Prince behaved with great decorum; he engaged in no intrigue, did not see Fox, and Mrs. Fitzherbert remained quite in the background. Even so the court party attacked him and endeavoured to misrepresent him; they said he behaved rudely to the Queen, and used "shocking language" about the King. It is no wonder that the Prince became restive under such misrepresentation. However, before long the crisis passed, the King became better — for a time.

In 1803 the Peace, or rather truce, of Amiens came to a violent end, and war again broke out with France. In England martial ardour and patriotic feeling were raised to the highest pitch. Throughout the kingdom was heard the noise of military preparations; volunteer associations were formed, immense sums of money were subscribed, and persons of high rank did not think it beneath them to serve as private soldiers, if commissions were not forthcoming. Every able-bodied man in England was eager to shed his blood for his country, now threatened with invasion by the dreaded "Bonaparte." Only one man was forbidden to take any share in his country's defence, and that one was the heir-apparent. He was nominally a colonel of dragoons, but he was not allowed by the King to take any active part on the plea of his rank, though his next

[1] East End House was burned down in 1884. It was originally built in 1699 by Sir Francis Child, Lord Mayor of London, and founder of Child's Bank.

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THE DUKE OF KENT

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brother, the Duke of York, was Commander-in-Chief, and military commands of the highest importance were bestowed on his younger brothers. The Prince of Wales addressed impassioned appeals to be allowed to bear arms in the defence of his country to the Prime Minister, Addington, who could only refer him to the King. The King met them all with a blunt refusal. The Prince then carried on an animated and voluminous correspondence with the Duke of York, but the Duke, as Commander-in-chief, on this occasion threw in his lot with the King. This produced a coolness between the two brothers, and it inflamed the Prince of Wales's mind still further against the King. He went about everywhere repeating his favourite expression that his father "hated him"; and he declared that the King forced this inaction upon him with the object of exposing him "to the obloquy of being regarded by the country as passing my time indifferent to the events which menace it, and insensible to the call of patriotism, much more to glory." The Prince's indignation was genuine, and he had a right to be indignant. The King's refusal was in fact part of a set plan to insult, humiliate, and misrepresent the heir-apparent on every possible occasion. In this instance the Prince spoilt his father's tactics by getting his friends to bring the question before the House of Commons, where it was made a subject of prolonged debate. Not content with this, the Prince took the unusual and unwise step of publishing the whole of the correspondence which had passed on the subject[1] — the King's letters, his own letters, the Duke of York's letters, and the Prime Minister's. The effect on the King of this publication was beyond what he could express in words; he regarded it as the crowning affront offered to him by his undutiful son. "He has published *my* letters! he has published *my* letters!" the King kept repeating, as though no more was needed to express the depths of his iniquity. Throughout this fierce family feud Mrs. Fitzherbert tried to pour balm on the wounded feelings of all concerned. She sought to mitigate the Prince's wrath against the King, or at least to check its public expression. It was she who prevented an open break between the Prince of Wales and the Duke of York, though her

[1] In the *Morning Chronicle*, December 7, 1803.

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sympathies seem to have been with the latter, for she admitted that "the Duke of York always acted beautifully." She knew how deeply attached the brothers were to each other, and she laboured hard to remove any and every misunderstanding between them which arose from the injudicious preference of the King. She came generally to be regarded by the royal family as a peacemaker and mediator. The Prince of Wales would often listen to her calm and reasoned words when he would listen to no one else, for he knew her to be absolutely disinterested, and after violent protests to the contrary he would come round to her way of thinking.

Even in such a delicate matter as his relations with the Princess of Wales, Mrs. Fitzherbert intervened with good results, and for a few years at least the ill-mated pair were content to live without annoying one another unnecessarily. Open discord and public scandal were avoided, and the world had come to recognise their separation as inevitable. The Prince and Princess of Wales occasionally met at the King's drawing-rooms, and greeted one another with ceremonious courtesy. The princess was regarded with ill-concealed aversion by Queen Charlotte and many of the Princesses: on the other hand the King was her friend, the Dukes of Kent and Sussex occasionally visited her, and the Duchess of York treated her with courtesy and scarcely veiled sympathy. The Princess of Wales was living at Montague House, Blackheath, where she entertained in a very informal way a good deal of company, some of whom she would have been better without. She did not manage her own affairs; her bills were all sent in to Carlton House to be paid. This arrangement did not work well, for the Princess, though not extravagant where her own needs were concerned, was very careless about money matters, very generous, and very easily imposed upon. Her almsgiving was indiscriminate, her tradesmen charged whatever they pleased, and her servants robbed her, with the result that her affairs soon became confused. The Prince appointed a Colonel Thomas as a sort of comptroller of her household, or rather of her bills. This did not mend matters, for in business matters Thomas was incapable, and the Princess disliked him, for she thought he was a sort of spy on her actions. Difficulties arose between the Princess and Thomas, which ex-

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asperated the Prince; and as he refused to communicate directly with the Princess, affairs became more and more involved. In this dilemma, Mrs. Fitzherbert suggested that the Duke of Kent, who was on friendly terms with the Princess, should try to arrange matters. The Prince agreed, and gave the Duke of Kent full power to do what he liked, provided he were not troubled further. The Duke of Kent, who was very conscientious and painstaking, found that the Princess's complaints against Thomas were quite justified, and he recommended his dismissal. The Duke was a little dubious how the Prince (who never would believe that the Princess could be right about anything) would take it, and he wrote to Mrs. Fitzherbert: —

H.R.H. the Duke of Kent to Mrs. Fitzherbert, Tilney Street.

"CASTLE HILL LODGE, *November* 21, 1801.

"MY DEAREST MRS. FITZHERBERT, — Having had occasion, in a letter I wrote this day to Admiral Payne, acquainting him for the Prince's information with the particulars of my visit to Blackheath, to speak my sentiments in union with those of the Princess, upon the inutility of Colonel Thomas's services to her, which, from conviction, I thought it my duty to do, I entreat your good offices with my brother, for whom you know my warm attachment, so as to prevent his taking offence at my sincerity and openness on this point, upon which I know he has formed another opinion.

"But I really felt it a duty incumbent on me, as the person employed by him to put the Princess's affairs under certain regulations, to point out that the Colonel was in every respect unfit for the business, and that the plan could not go on without a more capable person to direct it. I trust it will need no great exertion to convince the Prince of my zeal in his service, of my fidelity in the discharge of the duty he has entrusted me with, or of my firm friendship. But as I am aware, that on this point I have been compelled, from a sense of what in honour I owed him, to speak a little against what I knew to be *his* sentiments, I am apprehensive that, at the first outset, it *may* put him in a little ill-humour with me, and to prevent this continuing is the object of my thus intruding upon *you*. Permit

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me therefore to hope you will assist me in convincing the Prince that I have acted only from the sense of the duty I owe *him*, and from what, in honour and conscience, I felt I should act like a scoundrel, if I did not candidly state.

"I shall not trespass longer upon your time, than just to assure you that I shall ever be happy when I can be permitted to subscribe myself with sincere regard, your truly devoted and faithful servant, "EDWARD."

Mrs. Fitzherbert intervened and blunted the edge of the Prince's anger. Colonel Thomas was relieved of his duties, which were placed in the hands of a more capable person, and the Princess of Wales was duly grateful. She felt no jealousy of Mrs. Fitzherbert — an extraordinary situation, truly, for them both.

Unfortunately all the unhappy disputes between the Prince and Princess of Wales did not end so satisfactorily. Bitter quarrels presently arose concerning the custody and education of the Princess Charlotte, now a bright and intelligent child of seven or eight years old. She already showed signs of a high spirit, an affectionate disposition, and a generous temper; though in appearance she resembled her father, in temperament she was the daughter of her mother, to whom she was devotedly attached. The poor little Princess was in a difficult position; her father and mother were at war with one another, her grandmother was at war with her mother, and her grandfather at war with her father, and she was the object on which all their quarrels centred. To do the old King justice he was quick to see the harmful effect these family disputes must have on the child, and he resolved to take her education into his own hands. The Prince of Wales at first seemed to consent to this, then he resented it, and complained that he was treated as though he were not a fit person to be entrusted with the training of his daughter. He certainly was not. He had learned that the Princess of Wales was to have free access to her daughter at all times, when it should not interfere with her studies, and that the King was determined to do nothing to hurt the feelings of his "dearest daughter-in-law and niece," and to uphold on all occasions "her authority as a mother." The little Princess made no concealment of her preference.

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She was asked to a children's party at Windsor Castle, and being told that she might bring a friend, she instantly named her mother. All this, natural enough in the child, was resented by her father, and though he was devoted to children, he frequently treated his daughter with harshness. Consequently the little Princess grew to dread the interviews with her father, while those with her mother, who petted and spoiled her, were a delight.

In the end the Prince had to give way, and the King appointed the Dowager Lady de Clifford[1] and the Bishop of Exeter to undertake the care and education of the Princess Charlotte. Lady de Clifford had seen much of the French court; she was a woman of fine character, charming and gracious. She was a friend and neighbour of Mrs. Fitzherbert (she lived in South Audley Street, just round the corner from Tilney Street). On one occasion we find the Prince writing to his "dearest Lady de Clifford" (March 1, 1805) excusing himself from going to see "your little charge and you," on the plea of urgent business. He added, "If you wish for me late this evening, I mean to say between eleven and twelve o'clock, you know *where to find me.*" This was at Mrs. Fitzherbert's house in Tilney Street, where the Prince was wont to sup. Whether Lady de Clifford went there to see him deponent sayeth not, but the Prince's suggestion shows the curious intimacy that existed between all the parties. Yet this intimacy did not prevent the Prince later from using language to Lady de Clifford which the King declared "he could not sanction." One must not take these people and their quarrels too seriously. No doubt they understood one another better than it is possible for us to understand them. Mrs. Fitzherbert appears in the matter of the Princess Charlotte, as in others, as using her best endeavours to promote peace. She prayed the Prince to show more affection to his daughter. The Prince was naturally attached to her, but, embittered by constant disputes, and by the child's marked preference for her mother, he considered it his duty to treat her with coldness. Mrs. Fitzherbert loved children, and often at this time saw the Princess Charlotte, who became much attached to her. "Upon

[1] Sophia, Lady de Clifford, married Edward, twentieth Baron de Clifford, and died in 1828.

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one occasion Mrs. Fitzherbert told me," writes Lord Stourton, "she was much affected by the Princess Charlotte's throwing her arms around her neck and beseeching her to speak to her father that he would receive her with greater marks of affection; and she told me that she could not help weeping with this interesting child."[1] In this connection we may quote here an unpublished letter which the Princess wrote to her father when she was twelve years old:[2]—

H.R.H. the Princess Charlotte to H.R.H. the Prince of Wales.

"*December* 16, 1808.

"My dearest Papa, — I cannot resist writing to thank you for the very kind little remembrance you were so good as to send me by Lady Essex. She gave us a full account of the entertainments going on at the Pavilion. I could not help wishing I had been there — how happy should I have been to have seen you.

"I long to hear when you intend coming to London. When is this likely, pray tell me? I assure you I will endeavour to please you in everything, and I hope you will find me improved in my learning, and in goodness.

"I am, my dearest Papa, your ever affte and dutiful daughter,

"Charlotte."

The Princess of Wales raised no obstacle to Mrs. Fitzherbert's seeing her daughter; but the fact of these meetings leaked out, and great objection was taken by some persons whom it in no way concerned. The objection, curiously enough, did not arise from Mrs. Fitzherbert's anomalous position with the Prince, but from her religion. Before long, the rumour was started that she was trying to convert the little Princess to Popery, and many false and scurrilous paragraphs found their way into the press. The cartoonist also was not idle. One of them set forth a parody of a well-known picture entitled "The Guardian Angel conducting the soul of a child to heaven."

[1] Langdale, *op. cit.*

[2] This letter was found among Mrs. Fitzherbert's papers. It was doubtless given to her by the Prince of Wales, and may have been connected with her well-meant efforts to establish better relations between him and his daughter.

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The cartoon, dated April 2, 1805, portrays Mrs. Fitzherbert equipped with wings, with the Princess in her arms, soaring aloft from the Brighton Pavilion to a flower-bedecked altar; her lap is filled with a breviary and images of the saints, as playthings for the Princess; the leading members of the Whig party, such as Stanhope, Grenville, Grey, Erskine, Sheridan, and Fox, appear as attendant cherubim.

Nothing could be more unfair or untrue than the suggestion conveyed in this cartoon, for Mrs. Fitzherbert never tried to "convert" any one, high or low; but its publication had the effect of checking the meetings between herself and the Princess Charlotte, which thereafter became few and far between.

The ceaseless disputes with his family, combined with the failure of his political schemes, frequently made the Prince ill. Early in 1804, when he was at Brighton, he was seized with one of those sudden and mysterous attacks to which he was subject all his life. He treated it, as usual, with profuse bleeding, which afforded him relief, but brought him so low, that for a time he seems to have been in danger of his life. Mrs. Fitzherbert, contrary to her rule, took up her lodging at the Pavilion in order that she might be nearer the Prince, and she nursed him night and day with unremitting devotion. Throughout the Prince's illness, she unofficially informed the Queen of his progress through the Duke of Kent, who wrote to her every day to inquire after the Prince's health. One of his many letters to her at this time may be quoted here: —

H.R.H. the Duke of Kent to Mrs. Fitzherbert.

"KENSINGTON PALACE,
Saturday, February 4, 1804.

"MY DEAREST MRS. FITZHERBERT, — I cannot find words sufficient to express the joy I derived from your most kind letter of last evening, by which I have received so comfortable an account of the dear Prince. It has relieved me from an immense weight, as yesterday I must confess I felt quite heart-broken about him. Pray say everything most affectionate from me, and add that nothing could be kinder than the interest expressed both by the Queen and all our sisters about him. I request, though I have not the pleasure of personally knowing Sir

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Walter,[1] that you will express how grateful *I* feel to him for the care he has taken of the Prince, and the attachment he has evinced for him, on the present occasion.

"I have consulted with the Duke of Clarence about proper quarters for the Prince on his return to Town, and he instantly said he would *not* suffer him to go to *any* but *his*; so that this point is settled. If the noise should be troublesome, it will be obviated immediately by putting straw on the adjoining pavement.

"All is going on well with K[ing],[2] much as when I last wrote; the *hurry* is less than it was some days back, but still exists: we are still in a precarious state, but the physician told me an hour ago, unless anything suddenly occurred to effect a change for the worse, the balance was in the favour of his patient.

"Pray accept of the assurance of my unalterable friendship and esteem, and believe me ever to be, my dearest Mrs. Fitzherbert, most faithfully and devotedly yours,

"EDWARD."

On the Prince's recovery, Mrs. Fitzherbert devoted herself to bring about a reconciliation between the Prince and his parents. With the Queen, with whom he had quarrelled at the time of his father's illness in 1801, it was comparatively easy; she was always ready to make allowances for her son, and they were reconciled a few months later; but with the King, whose mind was partially unhinged, it was more difficult. The King proposed a meeting of reconciliation and then postponed it; he could not bring himself to forgive the Prince's publication of his letters. It was not until November 1804 that an interview took place between the father and son, in the presence of the Queen, the Duke and Duchess of York, and several of the Princesses. The Prince was very ill at ease, and those who saw the meeting predicted that "it is quite impossible that this reconciliation can last." It did not last, but it called a truce in the family strife, and that was something gained.

[1] Sir Walter Farquhar, Mrs. Fitzherbert's physician.

[2] The King was at this time very ill also, with a return of his old malady; after 1801 these attacks became increasingly frequent.

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CHAPTER XX

THE PRINCE'S PLEASURE-HOUSE

(1800–1808)

If Mrs. Fitzherbert's happiest years were those which followed her reconciliation to the Prince in 1800, the happiest hours of them without doubt were those which she spent with him at Brighton. It must have been there that they were "merry as crickets," for, when the Prince came to his lordly pleasure-house at Brighton, he left cares and worries behind him, and abandoned himself to the joys of the passing hour. Mrs. Fitzherbert had not been to Brighton for five or six years. The townsfolk rejoiced to see her among them again; they associated her more than any one else with Brighton's prosperity, for it was her liking for the place which had in past years drawn the Prince thither so often. At the time of the separation, none lamented more than the people of Brighton the breach between Mrs. Fitzherbert and the Prince, none execrated Lady Jersey more than they. When Mrs. Fitzherbert's little house near the Pavilion was closed, and rumour went forth that she would come no more, they felt that half their glory had departed. When, therefore, she came back with the Prince in the summer of 1801, expressions of joy and satisfaction were heard on all sides, and the phrase "Mrs. Fitzherbert and the Prince" resumed all its old attraction. The fact that during the interval the Prince had been provided with a Princess, who shared his dignities, and was the mother of his child, made no difference to the warmth of Mrs. Fitzherbert's welcome back to Brighton; nor did it affect her position there. Whatever the cause of this unhappy state of the Prince's domestic affairs, it was felt that she was not to blame. The cheers which greeted Mrs. Fitzherbert and the Prince on their first appearance on the Steine were loud and long. They were perhaps not altogether disinterested, for there had been rumours that, with his changed

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circumstances, the Prince would see less of Brighton. Now that he was with Mrs. Fitzherbert again, it was felt that the town was assured of all the benefits of his patronage for many a long day.

The general feeling of satisfaction was deepened by the news that the Prince, so far from abandoning Brighton, intended to spend more time there than before. It became known that he was purchasing land around the Pavilion with a view to extending the grounds, and that the palace was to be improved and enlarged. A great deal of building went on in Brighton during the years 1801–4. The Prince spent some of the money he obtained from Parliament after his marriage on decorating and enlarging his Pavilion at Brighton. While the alterations were in progress, we read, "several pieces on very beautiful Chinese paper" were presented to the Prince, and these suggested to him the famous Chinese gallery. The idea was duly carried out, and the gallery was decorated with dragons, lanterns, pagodas, and figures supposed to be peculiar to China. Herein may be traced the origin of the so-called Eastern decoration of the Pavilion. The Prince extended this style to its architecture, with the result that there gradually arose the grotesque and incongruous, though not altogether unlovely, building which visitors to Brighton wonder at to-day. The bewildering mixture of styles in its architecture arose from the varying moods of the wayward Prince. We learn that originally something of the building was Grecian and something was Gothic, but the central dome, or Rotunda, resembles a Turkish mosque; the pinnacles are Moorish if anything; one part seems to be Egyptian, another Chinese, and another to be reminiscent of Hindustan. The Prince called his house "Oriental," and with that general term it may be left to rest. A contemporary writer has described the Pavilion as "a nondescript monster in buildings. It appears like a mad house, or a house run mad, as it has neither beginning, middle, nor end." The alterations of the Pavilion never ceased until the death of George IV., and even William IV. added the north gate. The Pavilion may be seen to-day, as Thackeray says, "for sixpence," restored to much of its pristine splendour; the Chinese gallery; the music-room, with its gorgeous frescoes, and green and golden dragons; the yellow drawing-room, with its oriental colonnades; the

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A VIEW OF THE STEINE, BRIGHTON, *temp.* 1815

SHOWING MRS. FITZHERBERT'S HOUSE

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saloon, or rotunda; and above all the banqueting-room, with its domed ceiling representing an Eastern sky. Against this sky is painted a gigantic palm spreading its foliage, fruit, and flower, and beneath it floats a fiery dragon bearing in its claws a magnificent crystal chandelier.[1] These rooms are now dismantled of furniture, and the merry reckless crowd that filled them with life and movement are dead and gone, nearly a century ago, but otherwise they are unchanged from what they were in the Georgian days.

The decorations and alterations which transformed the Pavilion from a pleasant seaside residence into a semi-oriental palace, were chiefly carried out during this period (1801–4); they involved a great deal of pulling down, both in the Pavilion itself and in the adjoining buildings. Among the houses that disappeared was the small house which Mrs. Fitzherbert had occupied previously to her rupture with the Prince in 1794. It therefore became necessary that she should have a new residence in Brighton, as she always declined to live in the Pavilion. A suitable site was found close to the Pavilion on the Steine, and there she built her house, which was known as Steine House, or more generally as "the mansion of Mrs. Fitzherbert."[2] The house was large, roomy, and comfortable, though not magnificent enough to be called a mansion in the modern acceptation of the term. The house faced the Steine, separated from it by a little garden. The entrance was at the side. An outer hall led to an inner hall, and this opened on to two spacious rooms on the ground floor, the library and dining-room. A handsome double staircase led to the drawing-rooms on the first floor; there too were Mrs. Fitzherbert's boudoir and bedroom. Behind these again was a small oratory. The chief feature of the house was the wide, covered balcony or verandah, which ran the whole length of the front of the house, and commanded a fine view of the Steine and the sea beyond.[3]

[1] To some the principal interest of the Pavilion centres in the private apartments of George IV., which consist of a library, bedroom, bath, sitting, and dressing rooms. These rooms are on the ground floor, and look over the Pavilion lawns. They are of moderate size, and very little remains of their former splendour; the only remaining evidence of it being the bathroom of pure white marble, a great luxury in those days.

[2] The Lords of the Manor granted the ground to Mrs. Fitzherbert in 1803, and the following year the house was built.

[3] The view of the sea was much less interrupted by houses then than now.

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Access to it was from the drawing-rooms on the first floor. On this balcony Mrs. Fitzherbert spent much of her time; here when the weather was fine she received her friends, and sat chatting with them over a "dish of tea" or looking down on the ever-changing scene below. All Brighton walked, rode, or drove on the Steine in those days, and on the level open spaces, which are now gardens, divers entertainments took place — auctions, rustic sports, drilling of the militia, betting-rings in race week, Punch and Judy shows, and the playing of military bands.

The Prince of Wales was often to be seen upon Mrs. Fitzherbert's balcony, especially of a morning. He would sit there talking to her by the hour together; sometimes he would honour with a bow or a smile some one of his acquaintance passing on the Steine below. How he got there was a mystery to many. He was rarely seen to pass backwards and forwards between Mrs. Fitzherbert's house and the Pavilion. He must have had a private way, and the fact that he was so seldom seen to enter her house or to leave it, and yet appeared so often on the balcony, gave rise to the report that Mrs. Fitzherbert's house and the Pavilion were connected by an underground passage. If such a passage existed it was kept a profound secret during their lifetime; none of the retainers knew of it, and to-day every trace of it, either at the Pavilion or at Mrs. Fitzherbert's house, has disappeared, though at different times there have been rumours of its discovery.[1] The Prince, for some reason of his own, had an underground passage made which led directly from his private apartments at the Pavilion to his stables and riding-school, now known as the Dome. This passage exists to-day, but it leads in an opposite direction to Mrs. Fitzherbert's

[1] Mrs. Fitzherbert's house at Brighton was sold by public auction in 1838, about a year after her death. Since then it has passed through several hands. The late Judge Turner resided there for many years. Then it was rented by the Civil and United Service Club, who made many internal alterations. During their tenancy it was said that the entrance of the secret passage had been discovered. A stone trap led to a vault or passage which was choked up with rubbish, but it seemed to lead nowhere. The house is now occupied by the Young Men's Christian Association, who have made further alterations to meet their requirements. It seems a pity that this fine house, so interesting in its historical associations, could not be acquired by the municipality of Brighton, and converted to some public use as a memorial of Mrs. Fitzherbert — the woman to whom Brighton owes so much. At present, not even her picture marks the walls of the house where she died.

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house, which is at the south side of the Pavilion, whereas the Dome is at the north. On the whole, since no trace of it can be discovered, the story of an underground passage between the Pavilion and Mrs. Fitzherbert's house must be dismissed as doubtful. The Prince, who loved mystery, might well have suggested such a thing, but Mrs. Fitzherbert, who preferred everything open and above ground, would have been hardly likely to consent to it. Besides, why should there be any secrecy? Her relations with the Prince were well known; there surely was no occasion for a man to make a mystery about going to see his wife.

From the time Mrs. Fitzherbert's house was finished, she made Brighton her principal residence; that is to say, she spent many months there every year, and she regarded Brighton as a home. She interested herself in promoting the prosperity of the town, and gave largely to the local charities without distinction of creed. She spent Christmas there in 1802, and the local paper writes (December 27, 1802), "The charitable donations, and willing assistance which Mrs. Fitzherbert has bestowed, and continues to bestow, on the unfortunate individuals of this place have endeared her to the inhabitants of every description."

Coincident with the building of Mrs. Fitzherbert's house a wave of prosperity swept over Brighton. The town increased east, west, and north; east so far as the Royal Crescent, where a statue of the Prince, now removed by an ungrateful generation, graced the green plot in front; westward as far as what was then known as Bellevue, now Regency Square, and northwards to St. Nicholas's Church, which had before stood isolated in green fields. New banks were opened, new theatres and other places of amusement built, and fashionable physicians multiplied by the score. The town was thronged with distinguished visitors, who spent their money freely; houses and lodgings were at a premium, and trade was at its briskest. How could good Brightonians do anything but reverence those personages who brought them all these good things? Carlton House has been called "a very Pandora's box of vice and profligacy," but no such charge was ever brought against the Pavilion — at least in Brighton. Mrs. Fitzherbert's presence there as the reigning lady was considered a guarantee of its respectability,

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and whatever charges might be brought against the Prince elsewhere, in Brighton he could do no wrong.

We get many glimpses of life at the Pavilion during these years, and though the Prince and his companions were full of high spirits, and indulged in many pranks and practical jokes, and though there was sometimes hard-drinking after the manner of the time, yet it is never recorded that there was any serious lapse from decorum. Of course many stories were circulated; for there are people who see harm in the most innocent amusement; but few of these stories will bear investigation, and many of them were grossly exaggerated. Life at the Pavilion was merry enough to be sure, but it was not necessarily evil on that account. Within those "Oriental halls" the green and golden dragons looked down on many a curious scene; there was an endless succession of dinner-parties, concerts, balls, card-parties, and theatricals. Bacchus and Venus, Terpsichore and Melpomene were all honoured in turn, and stray grains of incense were thrown on the altars of Minerva and Mars. The Prince was passionately fond of music, his life appears to have been set to its strains; at Brighton his private band played twice daily, in the morning in the Pavilion grounds, in the evening indoors. The Prince suffered from what has been called a "superfoetation of activity"; he could never rest at Brighton. Perhaps the air had something to do with it. Inside the Pavilion there was always something going on — outside there were reviews, naval displays, races, cricket-matches, bathing and boating, donkey rides and water-parties without end. A local chronicler informs us: "It is *tonish* to indulge in water-parties before dinner; five or six people hire a boat and sail and paddle like the Phoenicians on the skirt of the shore. The senior mistress of the bath, Martha Gunn, makes a good *report* of her practice. The long-eared palfreys are still the favourites of the ladies; and Angels on Jerusalem ponies are no novelty." The Prince, though he was now middle-aged, was still a boy at heart, and often joined in these water-parties. Mrs. Fitzherbert joined in them too at his desire, though one would think she lost something of her dignity on such occasions.

Another of the Prince's freaks was to sup occasionally in the kitchen. These entertainments were of the nature of

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"surprise parties." The Prince, wearying of his state, would adjourn with all his company from the gorgeous banqueting-rooms to the kitchens and spend a merry hour. The following is a description of one of these "royal freaks" which happened rarely: "A scarlet cloth was thrown over the pavement; a splendid repast was provided, and the good-humoured Prince sat down with a select party of his friends, and spent a joyous hour. The whole of the servants, particularly the *female portion*, were delighted with this mark of royal condescension." "The royal condescension" became known, and formed the subject of many scurrilous paragraphs which the "royal freak" did not justify. It was all very merry, very foolish, perhaps, but who shall say that there was any harm in it?

The gaiety within the Pavilion communicated itself to the gay town outside, which became a veritable city of pleasure. The great popular festivities during these years were the celebrations of the Prince's birthday (August 12). This auspicious day was always celebrated at Brighton as a public holiday; oxen were roasted whole, bands played on the Steine and in the Pavilion grounds from morning till night, popular sports took place on the Level, such as donkey races, running and jumping in sacks, sparring matches, &c. In the evening there were bonfires and fireworks, and the whole town was illuminated. In truth those were brave days, and Brighton will never see their like again. The Steine was then at its meridian of glory; the world of fashion resorted thither daily, with the Prince of Wales at its head. Who shall describe the brilliant attire of the ladies on these promenades? and in those days the men ran them close. In dress the Prince was supreme, and his clothes were more eagerly scanned than those of any woman of quality. Whatever he wore became *le dernier cri* of the sartorial art. He was the arbiter of fashion, and despite his increasing stoutness (the Princess of Wales had called him "fat," which he never forgave), his figure and "deportment" were considered to be perfect. And then his bow! "Powers of Heaven!" exclaimed an Irishman, "there never was such a bow. It was a bow, sir, which concentrated in itself all the grace, all the elegance, all the easy pliability, which can be seen elsewhere in the three kingdoms. I could swear that he was born bowing, had continued bowing, and never did anything

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else but bow, from his birth to the present time. By the Powers! it was wonderful!"

There were many distinguished visitors to Brighton during this period. The famous French General Dumourier was there in the summer of 1805, and was sumptuously entertained at the Pavilion. When he paraded the Steine "he was the very centre of attraction." Warren Hastings was at Brighton the same year, hugging his grievances and nursing his wounded pride. The Prince welcomed him to the Pavilion many times, and Hastings has recorded the gracious kindly way in which he was received. That manly roystering fraternity known as the "royal brothers," one or another, was always at Brighton; thither too came Brummel with his airs of ineffable impudence; Sheridan with his polished wit and admirable manners, and Lord Thurlow, with his black bushy eyebrows and voice of thunder. The Prince treated Thurlow with great deference, though the eminent lawyer was nothing of a courtier. "Your father, sir," he growled, "will always be popular so long as he goes to church on Sunday, and remains faithful to that ugly woman, your mother; but you, sir, will never be popular." The Prince bore with "old gruffy" because he was so useful to him. Indeed, he combined business with pleasure at his Pavilion parties, and many were the politicians and pamphleteers who came to Brighton and were entertained at the Pavilion. The Prince always asked all those, however obscure, who might be useful to him in some capacity or other.

Among the many who came to Brighton at this time (in September 1805) was the now famous Thomas Creevey,[1] and his wife and her daughters. Creevey was a devoted follower of Fox, and the Prince knew of him as a needy politician who had a vote. Creevey wrote down his name at the Pavilion, and the Prince sent him the usual invitation to dinner. Creevey went, and thus describes his visit: "Mrs. Fitzherbert, whom I had never been in a room with before, sat on one side of the Prince with the Duke of Clarence on the other. . . . In the course of the evening the Prince took me up to the card-table where Mrs. Fitzherbert was playing and said, 'Mrs. Fitzherbert,

[1] Thomas Creevey, M.P. (1768–1838), a selection from whose papers, edited by Sir Herbert Maxwell, was published, 1903, under the title of "The Creevey Papers."

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I wish you would call upon Mrs. Creevey and say from me I shall be happy to see her here.'" [1]

The Creeveys were at Brighton for four months, and frequently dined at the Pavilion. Creevey writes: "We used to dine pretty punctually at six, the average number being about sixteen. . . . Mrs. Fitzherbert always dined there, and mostly one other lady — Lady Downshire very often, sometimes Lady Clare, or Lady Berkeley, or Mrs. Creevey. Mrs. Fitzherbert was a great card-player, and played every night. The Prince never touched a card, and was occupied in talking to his guests, and very much in listening to and giving directions to his band. At 12 o'clock punctually the band stopped, and sandwiches and wine and water were handed about, and shortly after the Prince made a bow, and we all dispersed. I had heard a good deal of the Prince's drinking, but during the time I speak of, I never saw him the least drunk but once." . . .

Creevey goes on to say: —

"It used to be the Duke of Norfolk's [2] custom to come over every year from Arundel to pay his respects to the Prince and stay two days at Brighton, on both of which he always dined at the Pavilion. In the year 1804, upon this annual visit, the Prince had drunk so much as to be made very seriously ill by it, so that in 1805 (the year that I was there), when the Duke came, Mrs. Fitzherbert, who was always the Prince's best friend, was very much afraid of his being again made ill, and she persuaded the Prince to adopt different stratagems to avoid drinking with the Duke. I dined there on both days, and letters were brought in each day after dinner to the Prince, which he affected to consider of great importance, and so went out to answer them, while the Duke of Clarence went on drinking with the Duke of Norfolk. But on the second day this joke was carried too far, and in the evening the Duke of Norfolk showed he was affronted. The Prince took me aside and said, 'Stay after every one is gone to-night; the Jockey's got sulky, and I must give him a broiled bone to get him in a good humour again.' So, of course, I stayed, and about one o'clock the Prince of Wales and Duke of Clarence, the Duke of Norfolk and myself, sat down to a supper of broiled bones, the result of

[1] "The Creevey Papers," vol. i. pp. 47, 48.

[2] The eleventh Duke of Norfolk, known as "the Jockey," who died in 1815.

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which was that, having fallen asleep myself, I was awoke by the sound of the Duke of Norfolk's snoring. I found the Prince of Wales and the Duke of Clarence in a very animated discussion as to the particular shape and make of the wig worn by George II." [1]

The Duke of Norfolk, "Jockey of Norfolk," was a friend of Fox, and in public affairs showed a certain amount of political talent, but we look in vain for any redeeming qualities in his private character. He was heartless in his dealing with men, and worse than heartless in his relations with women. Gross in his tastes, he affected low company and low pleasures; a glutton and a drunkard, so dirty was he in his personal habits that he rarely washed himself, and still more rarely changed his linen. He complained one day to Dudley North that he suffered from rheumatism, and had tried every remedy without effect.[2] "Pray, my Lord Duke," said North, "did you ever try a clean shirt?" "Drunkenness," writes Sir Nathaniel Wraxall, "was in him an hereditary vice, transmitted down, probably, by his ancestors from Plantagenet times, and inherent in his formation." [3]

Whenever the Duke came to Brighton, his appearance was the signal for an orgie. On one of these occasions he quarrelled with the royal brothers over some imaginary slight (he was always quarrelsome in his cups), and ordered his carriage to drive him back to Arundel. The Prince determined that he should not go, but it was useless to argue with him in his present condition. When the coach came round the Prince escorted the Duke to the door, and privately ordered the coachman to drive for half-an-hour round the Pavilion grounds. The Duke was so drunk that he did not know whither he was going; he fell asleep in the coach, and when it stopped he thought he was at the end of his journey. He was carried back into the Pavilion and put to bed. Under all the circumstances, it seemed the best thing to be done. This plain statement of the incident may be compared with Thackeray's distorted version in the "Four

[1] "The Creevey Papers," vol. i. pp. 49–51.

[2] "On one side Duke Norfolk pushed forward with strife,
For he never liked water throughout his whole life."
The Times, March 1793, "On the late Inundation in Old Palace Yard."

[3] Wraxall's "Memoirs of my own Time."

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Georges," given below.[1] One would gather from it that the Duke of Norfolk was a blameless old man, the innocent victim of a low trick on the part of the wicked Prince, instead of being what he was, one of the most hardened and disreputable old sots in existence. The scene was discreditable to every one concerned, but there was nothing in it to justify Thackeray's malevolent attack on the Prince, for we must take into account not only the Duke's character but the manners of the time, in which practical jokes and heavy drinking were common. "Men of all ages drink abominably," writes Sir Gilbert Elliot. "Fox drinks what I should call a great deal, though he is not reckoned to do so by his companions, Sheridan excessively, and Grey more than any of them. . . . Pitt, I am told, drinks as much as anybody."[2]

In October our lively chronicler Creevey was called away from Brighton, but he left his wife behind him, to push his interests at the Pavilion. Though a handsome and agreeable woman, Mrs. Creevey does not seem to have been very successful with the Prince, but she made the running with Mrs. Fitzherbert. The letters which she wrote to her husband from Brighton, allowing for exaggeration, give interesting accounts of the life at the Pavilion, and throw side-lights on the relations between the Prince and Mrs. Fitzherbert.

[1] "The Prince of Wales had concocted with his royal brothers a notable scheme for making the old man drunk. Every person at table was enjoined to drink wine with the Duke — a challenge which the old toper did not refuse. He soon began to see that there was a conspiracy against him; he drank glass for glass; he overthrew many of the brave. At last the First Gentleman of Europe proposed bumpers of brandy. One of the royal brothers filled a great glass for the Duke. He stood up and tossed off the drink. 'Now' said he, 'I will have my carriage and go home.' The Prince urged upon him his previous promise to sleep under the roof where he had been so generously entertained. 'No,' he said; 'he had had enough of such hospitality. A trap had been set for him; he would leave the place at once and never enter its doors more.'

"The carriage was called, and came; but, in the half-hour's interval, the liquor had proved too potent for the old man; his host's generous purpose was answered, and the Duke's old grey head lay stupefied on the table. Nevertheless, when his post-chaise was announced, he staggered to it as well as he could, and stumbling in, bade the postillions drive to Arundel. They drove him for half-an-hour round and round the Pavilion lawn; the poor old man fancied he was going home. When he awoke that morning, he was in bed at the Prince's hideous house at Brighton. . . . I can fancy the flushed faces of the royal Princes as they support themselves at the portico pillars, and look on at old Norfolk's disgrace; but I can't fancy how the man who perpetrated it continued to be called a gentleman." — "The Four Georges."

[2] "Life and Letters of Sir Gilbert Elliot."

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Mrs. Creevey writes to Mr. Creevey (October 29, 1805): "Oh, this wicked Pavilion! We were there till ½ past one this morning. . . . The Prince came up and sat by me — introduced McMahon[1] to me and talked a great deal about Mrs. Fitzherbert — said she had been 'delighted' with my note and wished much to see me. He asked her, 'When?' — and he said her answer was, 'Not till *you* are gone, and I can see her *comfortably*.' I suppose this might be correct, for Mac told me he had been 'worrying her to death' all the morning."[2]

The heat of the Pavilion was a constant source of complaint among the Prince's guests. The Prince, who disliked cold intensely, had "a sort of patent stove" placed in the hall to heat the building, and it did so so effectually that his guests were nearly suffocated. The room in which the Prince dined was known among them as "the royal oven." It had a domed ceiling, and every particle of air was excluded; when the fire there was lighted and the patent stove was burning in the hall, the diners were nearly baked. This gave rise to one of Sheridan's witticisms. They were dining one day in the "royal oven" when Sheridan said to Hanger: "How do you feel yourself, Hanger?" "Hot, hot as hell," gasped Hanger. "It is quite right," said Sheridan, "that all of us here should be prepared in this world for what we may be sure will be our climate in the next." Mrs. Creevey suffered from "the climate" like the rest of the company, for she writes (November 5, 1805): "My head is *very* bad, I suppose with the heat of the Pavilion last night. We were there before Mrs. Fitzherbert came, and it almost made her faint, but she put on no airs to be interesting and soon recovered, and I had a great deal of comfortable prose with her. . . . Before she came, he (the Prince) was talking of the fineness of the day, and said, 'But I was not out. I went to Mrs. Fitzherbert's at one o'clock, and stayed talking with her till past six, which was certainly very *unfashionable*.' Now, was he not at that moment thinking of her as his lawful wife? for in no other sense could he call it *unfashionable*."[3]

Mrs. Creevey apparently quite lost her heart to Mrs. Fitz-

[1] The Right Hon. John McMahon, Private Secretary to the Prince of Wales.
[2] "The Creevey Papers," vol. i. p. 65.
[3] "The Creevey Papers," vol. i. pp. 67, 68.

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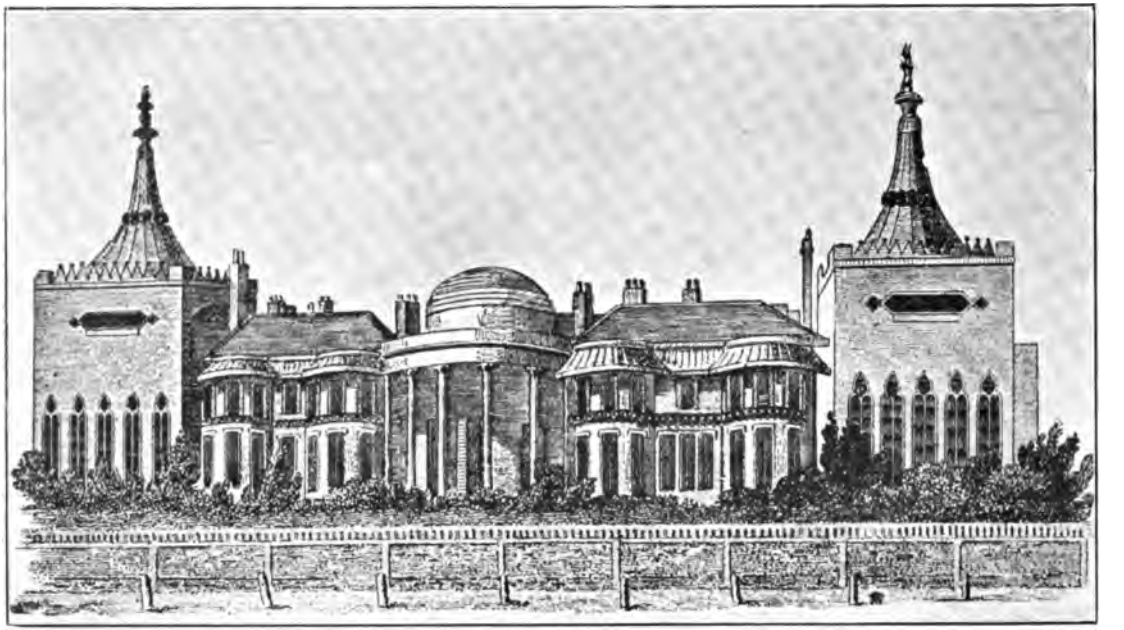

THE PAVILION, BRIGHTON, *circa* 1818

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herbert, whom she now calls "her mistress." She writes to her husband: "*Friday Night*, 12 *o'clock*. . . . I think you will like to hear I have spent a very comfortable evening with my mistress. We had a long discourse about Lady Wellesley. The folly of men marrying such women led us to Mrs. Fox, and I think she would have liked to go further than I dared or than our neighbours would permit."[1] Mrs. Creevey either was deceived by the graciousness of Mrs. Fitzherbert's manner (she was always gracious to every one) or, having failed with the Prince, she was at pains to impress on her husband that she had secured a friend at court in Mrs. Fitzherbert. She writes: *Past* 4 *o'clock, Monday:* "Mrs. Fitzherbert came before 12, and has literally only this moment left me. We have been all the time alone, and she has been confidential to a degree that almost frightens me, and that I can hardly think sufficiently accounted for by her professing in the strongest terms to have liked me more and more every time she has seen me. . . . So much in excuse for her telling me the history of her life, and dwelling more particularly on the explanation of all her feelings and conduct towards the Prince. If she is as *true* as I think she is *wise*, she is an extraordinary person, and most worthy to be beloved."

Now, with due reference to Mrs. Creevey (a very superior person to her husband), all we know of Mrs. Fitzherbert goes to show that she was the last woman in the world to give herself away in this manner to a comparative stranger. She was, by long training, cautious in her conduct, and guarded in her conversation; especially on *The Subject*, as she called her relations with the Prince, her lips were always sealed, even to those who knew her best. She is very unlikely, therefore, to have unsealed them to Mrs. Creevey. Nor was she a woman to form sudden friendships, especially with the Creeveys, whose measure she must have taken at once, for people of their type were all too common at the Prince's court. She had a habit of looking blank, and smiling when questioned, and of affecting ignorance which led many people — Creevey among them — into the mistake of thinking her amiably stupid. Mrs. Creevey sends her husband a letter which was written

[1] "The Creevey Papers," vol. i. p. 70.

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to her by Mrs. Fitzherbert announcing the death of Nelson.[1] This letter was written at the time Mrs. Fitzherbert was supposed to be pouring forth these indiscreet confidences to her, yet it is couched in terms of formal civility, not at all the sort of epistle one would write to a cherished confidante and friend.

Mrs. Fitzherbert to Mrs. Creevey.

"*November* 6, 1805.

"D[r] MADAM, — The Prince has this moment rec[d]. an account from the Admiralty of the death of poor Lord Nelson, which has affected him most extremely. I think you may wish to know the news, which, upon any other occasion might be called a glorious victory — twenty out of three and thirty of the enemy's fleet being entirely destroyed — no English ship being taken or sunk — Capts. Duff and Cook both kill'd, and the French Adl. Villeneuve taken prisoner. Poor Lord Nelson rec[d]. his death by a shot of a musket from an enemy's ship upon his shoulder, and expir'd two hours after, but not till the ship struck and afterwards sunk, which he had the consolation of hearing, as well as his compleat victory, before he died. Excuse this hurried scrawl! I am so nervous I scarce can hold my pen. God bless you. Yours, "M. FITZHERBERT."[2]

The news of Nelson's death greatly affected the Prince; he did not appear in public the day it was known, but spent the whole day alone with Mrs. Fitzherbert. Mrs. Creevey had something to say on this subject. She saw Mrs. Fitzherbert a few days later, and writes (November 8, 1805): "The first of my visits this morning was to my Mistress. . . . I found her alone, and she was excellent — gave me an account of the Prince's grief about Lord N., and then entered into the domestic failings of the latter, in a way infinitely creditable to her, and skilful too. She was all for Lady Nelson, and against Lady Hamilton who, she said (hero though he was), overpower'd him, and took possession of him quite by force. But she ended in a good way, by saying, 'Poor creature! I am sorry for her now, for I suppose she is in grief.'"[3]

[1] The Battle of Trafalgar was fought, and Nelson died, on October 21, 1805.
[2] "The Creevey Papers," vol. i. pp. 69, 70. [3] Ibid., vol. i. pp. 70, 71.

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With Nelson's last dying request concerning Lady Hamilton the Prince heartily sympathised. He (the Prince) wrote to a friend:[1] "You may be well assured that, did it depend on me, there would not be a wish, a desire of our ever-to-be-lamented and much-loved friend, as well as adored hero, that I would not consider as a solemn obligation upon his friends and his country to fulfil; it is a duty they owe to his memory, and his matchless and unrivalled excellence. Such are my sentiments; and I hope that there is still in this country sufficient honour, virtue, and gratitude to prompt us to ratify and to carry into effect the last dying request of our Nelson — by that means proving, not only to the whole world, but to future ages, that we were worthy of having such a man belonging to us."

Unfortunately it did not depend upon the Prince, and the dirsegard of Nelson's dying wish by those in authority, and the hard fate of Lady Hamilton, are matters of history. The Prince had neither power nor influence either at court or with the Government. His advocacy did more harm than good, and for him to champion a cause was sufficient for it to be negatived. Never was heir-apparent in a position more galling. But the Prince did all he could to show his respect for the dead hero's memory; he stopped all festivities at the Pavilion for ten days, and then, lest he should be thought unpatriotic (for whatever he did was wrong in the estimation of the King's court), he celebrated the victory of Trafalgar in great style. A superb illumination of the town of Brighton took place on November 14, and on the following day the Prince of Wales threw the Pavilion open for an "Inhabitants' ball." Everything was done magnificently. The Prince, we are told, attended by a large company of "fashionables," appeared in the ballroom "with all that amiable condescension for which he is so eminently and deservedly distinguished, but retired before supper, as did Mrs. Fitzherbert and her party, composed of about a dozen ladies of the first rank and fashion."

[1] Letter of the Prince of Wales to Mr. Alexander Davison.

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CHAPTER XXI

THE SEYMOUR CASE [1]

(1803–1806)

DURING the years 1803–1806 Mrs. Fitzherbert found herself involved in a protracted lawsuit concerning the custody of a little girl, Mary Seymour, who had been placed under her care, and whom she regarded as her ward and adopted daughter.

Mary Seymour, for a time the object of much litigation, was the youngest orphan child of Lord Hugh and Lady Horatia Seymour.[2] Lord Hugh Seymour was the fifth son of the first Marquess of Hertford. He married in 1786 the lovely Lady Horatia, third daughter of the second Earl Waldegrave, whose mother had married secondly the Duke of Gloucester. The Prince of Wales in 1786 had appointed Lord Hugh (then a captain in the navy) his Master of the Robes and Keeper of the Privy Purse. Lord Hugh married Lady Horatia soon after this appointment, and through his relations with the Prince he came to know of his marriage with Mrs. Fitzherbert. At this period Lord Hugh and Lady Horatia lived much in the Prince of Wales's set. Both held Mrs. Fitzherbert in high esteem, and between Mrs. Fitzherbert and Lady Horatia a warm friendship existed. In 1790 Lord Hugh was given a higher

[1] The facts related in this chapter concerning the Seymour case are based (*a*) upon a memorandum written by Admiral Sir George Seymour, G. C. B. (Mrs. Dawson Damer's eldest brother), and (*b*) on a Parliamentary paper, printed for the House of Lords. This paper contains all the letters and affidavits *made on both sides* before the Court of Chancery, and was issued for the information of the Peers when the case came before the House of Lords in 1806.

[2] Admiral *Lord Hugh Seymour*, fifth son of the first Marquess of Hertford, m. 1786 *Lady Anne Horatia*, third daughter of the second Earl Waldegrave. They both died in 1801, leaving issue five sons and two daughters, viz.: —

George Francis (*Sir*) *Seymour*, Admiral of the Fleet, G.C.B., d. 1870; *Hugh Henry*, Lt.-Col., d. 1821; *Horace Beauchamp* (*Sir*), K.C.B., Col., M.P., d. 1851; *William John Richard*, b. 1793, d. 1801; *Frederick Charles William*, b. 1797, d. 1856; *Horatia*, m. 1814 John Philip Morier, d. 1853; *Mary Georgiana Emma*, b. 1798, m. 1825 Rt. Hon. G. L. Dawson Damer, d. 1848.

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appointment in the navy, and his duties took him to sea. For a time, therefore, neither he nor his wife saw much of the Prince of Wales or Mrs. Fitzherbert. In 1794 came the Prince's separation from Mrs. Fitzherbert, and in 1795 his marriage to Princess Caroline of Brunswick. Knowing that the Prince was already married to Mrs. Fitzherbert by a ceremony which, though not binding in law, was binding in honour, Lord Hugh strongly disapproved of the Prince's subsequent marriage to the Princess Caroline, and of all the circumstances connected with Lady Jersey. He felt that he could no longer continue even an honorary member of the Prince of Wales's household, and resigned his offices. This brought about an estrangement between the Prince and Lord Hugh, which lasted until the latter's death in 1801. But the friendship which he and Lady Horatia felt for Mrs. Fitzherbert continued unabated.

Lady Horatia Seymour, who was the most beautiful of the three beautiful Waldegrave sisters, bore her husband a numerous family, five sons and two daughters. On November 23, 1798, her last and youngest child, Mary, was born at Brompton. Lady Horatia was then in a very delicate state of health — she had inherited the seeds of consumption, which were rapidly developing. The doctors declared that the only chance of saving her life was for her to go at once to Madeira, before the winter was further advanced. Unfortunately this involved separation from her infant, for the child was extremely delicate, and the doctors would not suffer her to be exposed to the risks of a sea voyage. Lady Horatia was greatly embarrassed and distressed, and in her dilemma she wrote to Mrs. Fitzherbert, who was then at Bath, and told her of her trouble. Mrs. Fitzherbert, on the strength of her long friendship, immediately wrote to Lady Horatia offering to go and see her, and to take charge of *any* of her children if it would make things easier for her. Lady Horatia replied to her from Brompton as follows: —

"DEAR MRS. FITZHERBERT, — The letter I received from you on Monday was just like yourself, everything that is kind, good, friendly, and comfortable to one's feelings. It appears to me quite certain that I shall leave this place on Monday, and shall be at Portsmouth on Tuesday, so pray meet us there

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as soon as you can after Tuesday. I do not foresee anything that will prevent us from leaving home that day, but if there should be I will let your know; at all events I will write a letter on Monday before I set out. Having got leave to take Frederick,[1] I cannot bring myself to give him up again. I know exactly what you feel about taking care of one of them, and nothing would be a greater relief to my mind than leaving little Mary with you; but I know very well that the instant her little finger ached you would be frightened and make yourself ill, therefore as I cannot ensure her perfect health I think she had better be at Hambledon with Phillips, who will have no alarms. But we will talk all this over at Portsmouth; I cannot express how sincerely we feel your kindness."

Mrs. Fitzherbert therefore went to see Lady Horatia at Portsmouth the first week in December 1798, travelling thither from Bath. She found Lady Horatia with Lord Hugh Seymour and her sister the Countess of Euston. At Portsmouth Mrs. Fitzherbert repeated her offer, and it was then settled that the infant, Mary Seymour, should be committed to her care. The child was left at Brompton with the nurse, and it was agreed by the parents that she should be delivered into Mrs. Fitzherbert's hands as soon as she returned to London. Mrs. Fitzherbert testified on affidavit that this arrangement "appeared to afford infinite relief and comfort to the mind of Lady Horatia, and to give great satisfaction not only to Lord Hugh Seymour but to Lady Euston." She also declared that she was induced to take charge of the child "solely by her affection and friendship for Lady Horatia." The matter being thus arranged, Mrs. Fitzherbert left Portsmouth and returned to Bath to finish her "cure" there.

Lady Horatia wrote Mrs. Fitzherbert the following letter the day after she left Portsmouth: —

"My dear Mrs. Fitz., — I was quite glad you were off somehow or other yesterday without my taking leave of you, as I felt as nervous as possible as long as I knew you were in the house, wishing, yet dreading, to see you. The ships are just

[1] Frederick was Lady Horatia's youngest boy, then little more than a year old.

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come round, and Sir J. Laforey[1] sends me word that we are to sail to-morrow, so I hope the wind will continue fair. *I have written to Lady George Seymour*[2] *to tell her that little Mary is to be your child.* There never was anything so kind and good as yourself, but it is impossible for me to express everything that I feel about you."

The next day Lady Horatia sailed for Madeira. Mrs. Fitzherbert caught a severe chill on her journey from Portsmouth, and in consequence she was detained at Bath for six weeks longer than she had intended to stay. She was therefore not able at once to claim the infant Mary Seymour, who was meantime taken first to the house of her maternal aunt, Lady Euston, and then removed to the house of Lord George Seymour, her paternal uncle. Mrs. Fitzherbert returned to London in February 1799, and a few days later she received a message from Lord George Seymour, asking her to send for his niece, Mary Seymour, at once, as measles had broken out in his family. Mrs. Fitzherbert took away the little girl immediately, and brought her to her house in Tilney Street. From that day she became to her as though she were her own child.

Later in the year (1799), Lord Hugh Seymour, the child's father, returned from Madeira, where he had left Lady Horatia, whose health was still precarious. During his stay in London he was daily at Mrs. Fitzherbert's house to see little Mary, or "Minney" as she was called, and he often expressed to Mrs. Fitzherbert his gratitude at the tender care she took of the child. Lady Horatia wrote to Mrs. Fitzherbert to the same effect. Lord Hugh was only in England two months; he then sailed for Jamaica, calling at Madeira to take up Lady Horatia on his way thither. He never came back again to England. Lady Horatia remained with her husband in Jamaica for nearly two years, but the climate could not cure but only arrest the fatal progress of her disease.

Early in June 1801 Lady Horatia returned to London and took a house in Charlotte Street, Portland Place, in order that she might have her children with her. The hand of death was already upon her. She was only in London about a month,

[1] Admiral Sir John Laforey, Bart. (1729–1796).
[2] Lady Horatia's sister-in-law.

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and then she went to Bristol, where she died, on July 12, 1801. Lord Hugh died in Jamaica on September 11 following, without having received the news of his wife's death. He left seven children, the youngest of whom, Mary, then three years of age, was still living under the care of Mrs. Fitzherbert.

Lord Hugh Seymour's will came to hand some months later. In it he appointed the Earl of Euston and Lord Henry Seymour as his executors and as the guardians of his children, whom he mentioned by name. Mary was not mentioned, as the will had been made before she was born. The executors, however, thought that their guardianship extended to her as well, and as they (Lord Henry Seymour in particular) did not wish that the child should remain permanently with Mrs. Fitzherbert, they wrote to tell her that Lady Waldegrave, the child's aunt, was willing to undertake the care of the little girl, as soon as it was convenient to Mrs. Fitzherbert to give her up. Mrs. Fitzherbert was greatly distressed at this notification, and said that she had become so much attached to "Minney" that she should part from her with very great regret; she prayed that the removal of the child should be postponed until she was a little older. The executors, mindful of Mrs. Fitzherbert's kindness and generosity in the past, and also of the fact that the little girl was in a very delicate state of health, agreed to her request, and said that they would allow the child to remain another year, until June 1803. Before that time came, the Prince of Wales, in February 1803, sent a message to the executors, saying that he, as well as Mrs. Fitzherbert, had become so much attached to "Minney," and saw how much the child would suffer from being taken away from one who loved her as a mother, that he would settle £10,000 upon her, if they would consent to her remaining with Mrs. Fitzherbert. But the executors, Lord Henry Seymour especially, were inflexible. Lord Henry declined the Prince's offer, saying that his niece Mary would have sufficient fortune of her own (the equal share of her father's property which she had inherited), and he pointed out that Mrs. Fitzherbert was no kin to the child, who had many relatives in blood who were able and willing to take charge of her.[1] He had therefore made arrangements for

[1] The nearest of kin of Miss Mary Seymour other than her brothers and sisters (who were infants) were: H.R.H. the Duchess of Gloucester, her maternal

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LADY HORATIA SEYMOUR

(*After a Miniature by* RICHARD COSWAY, R.A., *by permission of* Lady CONSTANCE LESLIE)

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her to be placed under the care of her aunt, Lady Waldegrave.

Mrs. Fitzherbert was overwhelmed with grief at the thought of losing the child; moreover, Lady Waldegrave was anything but a friend of Mrs. Fitzherbert's, and the separation would therefore be complete. The Prince, too, felt the loss keenly, and he vowed that he would not have the child torn from her home. He was always at Mrs. Fitzherbert's house in those days, and had become devoted to little Mary Seymour. The opposition of the executors, and the tears of Mrs. Fitzherbert, determined him to have things arranged as he wished. He consulted the ex-Lord Chancellor, Thurlow, who advised him to employ a young and rising lawyer named Romilly,[1] who counselled Mrs. Fitzherbert to refuse to yield up the child. Romilly argued that the right to the custody of the infant Mary Seymour assumed by the executors of her father's will was unfounded, as they were only appointed co-guardians with Lady Horatia in the event of her second marriage. Moreover, the will was made before Mary was born. The result was that, in July 1803, Mr. Bentinck, an intimate friend of Lord Hugh Seymour, who was named as "next friend of the Appellant," caused a Bill to be filed in the Court of Chancery against Lord Euston and Lord Henry Seymour, who claimed the guardianship of *all* the children of the late Lord Hugh Seymour, including Mary.

The case was argued at length. It is worthy of note that no objection was raised to Mrs. Fitzherbert on the ground of her peculiar position with the Prince of Wales, which (unless she was his wife) might surely have disqualified her from acting as the guardian of a female child of high birth connections. On the contrary, the Attorney General, who appeared for Lord Euston and Lord Henry Seymour, began his speech by saying that "Mrs. Fitzherbert merited everything that could be said

grandmother; the Marquess of Hertford, Lord Henry Seymour, Lord Robert Seymour, Lord William Seymour, Lord George Seymour, her paternal uncles; the countess of Lincoln, Lady Elizabeth Seymour, Lady Isabella Hatton, her paternal aunts; the Countess Waldegrave and the Countess of Euston, her maternal aunts; H.H. Prince William Frederick of Gloucester, her maternal uncle of the half-blood, and H.H. Princess Sophia Matilda of Gloucester, her maternal aunt of the half-blood.

[1] Afterwards Sir Samuel Romilly (1757–1818), K.C., M.P., Solicitor-General

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in her praise; but whatever amiable qualities she might possess, the religion she professed excluded her from the right to retain the custody of a Protestant child." Mr. Romilly, for Mrs. Fitzherbert, insisted "that there could be no danger to the religion of the child from the influence of Mrs. Fitzherbert," and added that "the child's residence with Mrs. Fitzherbert would not only be the means of her fortune accumulating by the time of her coming of age, but that she would derive peculiar advantage from the patronage and the protection of the Prince of Wales!"

A statement of facts was presented, Mrs. Fitzherbert being described as "Maria Fitzherbert, Widow," and many affidavits were sworn to. From them we quote the following:[1] —

Mrs. Fitzherbert in her affidavit (in addition to the facts connected with the handing over of the child to her care already related) testified:

"That upon Lady Horatia's return to England in 1801 Mrs. Fitzherbert, uncertain whether she might not think herself well enough, and chuse to resume the child, went to converse with her on that subject, but Lady Horatia (perceiving her emotion at the idea of parting with the child, for which Mrs. Fitzherbert had then contracted a maternal affection) answered, shedding tears, 'Don't think I could be so unfeeling as to take her from you,' and on Mrs. Fitzherbert asking her what she was to do with it, she answered, 'Pray, keep it, and do with it as you please, and as you have done; as I consider it is more your child than my own:' or used words to that effect:

"That the Appellant[2] was daily afterwards, during Lady Horatia's stay in town, sent to visit her, but she particularly desired that Mrs. Fitzherbert should continue to have the uncontrolled management of her, and send her only when and as she should think proper: . . .

[1] These affidavits were afterwards printed in a Parliamentary Paper which is thus entitled: —

HOUSE OF LORDS.
Between

MARY GEORGIANA EMMA SEYMOUR, an Infant, by WILLIAM BENTINCK, Esquire, her next friend, *Appellant*.

The Right Honourable GEORGE FITZROY, commonly called the Earl of Euston, and the Honourable HENRY SEYMOUR, commonly called Lord HENRY SEYMOUR, *Respondents*.

[2] The infant, Mary Seymour, herein called the Appellant.

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"That Mrs. Fitzherbert having, when Lady Horatia finally resigned the Appellant to her care in the manner before stated, given her to understand that she would accept and thenceforth consider the Appellant as her adopted child; she had ever since felt herself to be under an obligation of the most solemn nature to discharge towards the Appellant, to the utmost of her power, all the duties of a mother; to which she was no less impelled by the maternal affection she bore towards the Appellant; and she was therefore earnestly desirous to be permitted to continue the care and charge of the Appellant; and in case the Court should think proper to appoint her Guardian, she intended and was willing to undertake to continue to maintain and educate her in a manner suitable to her future fortune and expectations, at her own expense, in order that the whole income of the Appellant's fortune might accumulate for her benefit:

"That the Appellant is a child of uncommonly early discernment and of great facility in learning, and Mrs. Fitzherbert, being desirous of giving her every advantage in education, and that she should be bred up in the principles of the Church of England, did in the early part of the then last winter, apply to the Bishop of Winchester to take on him the superintendence of her religious education, and to recommend to her a clergyman of the Church of England to proceed in instructing her in reading (in which she was very forward) and to commence and take the conduct of her education in the principles of religion:

"That the Bishop complied with her request, and recommended the Rev. Mr. Crofts, preacher at Portland Chapel, as a proper tutor for the Appellant, by whom she had been attended and instructed accordingly, and she had been occasionally examined by the Bishop, who was well satisfied with her progress:

"That although Mrs. Fitzherbert was bred in the Roman Catholic faith, she always entertained and expressed the opinion that a child ought to be educated in the religion professed by its parents; and that certainly the daughter of a great family, such as the Appellant, ought to be educated in the Established religion of her country:

"That Mrs. Fitzherbert had in fact educated a child of inferior condition, born in her own house, in that religion, thinking it more advantageous for her; for though Mrs. Fitzherbert professed the tenets of the Catholic religion in which

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she was educated, she did not consider it her duty either to make converts or to educate the children of Protestants in the Catholic religion; and she felt that to attempt to educate the Appellant in a religion different from that of her parents, would be a gross breach of the confidence reposed in her, and of that duty she had undertaken to discharge:

"That the Appellant was of a delicate constitution and of a very tender and affectionate disposition, and having known no other mother than Mrs. Fitzherbert, she was bound to her by as strong ties of affection as she could possibly have been to her natural mother; and the separation of her from Mrs. Fitzherbert would deeply affect her mind and not improbably impair her health, whilst to Mrs. Fitzherbert, by depriving her of an object of her most tender affection, and of the means of discharging her engagement to her dying friend, it would prove the source of unspeakable and lasting affliction."

The Prince of Wales also made an affidavit, sworn November 24, 1804. He stated, "That a great intimacy and friendship subsisted between his Royal Highness and Lord Hugh Seymour and Lady Horatia:

"That the Appellant having been entrusted by Lord Hugh and Lady Horatia, during the absence of Lady Horatia from England, between the latter end of the year 1798 and the Spring of 1801, on account of her health, to the care of Mrs. Fitzherbert, his Royal Highness frequently saw and by degrees became much attached to the Appellant, as well on her own account as on that of her parents:

"That about the month of June 1801, Lady Horatia having some little time before returned to England in a very declining state of health, his Royal Highness received a message from her requesting him to call upon her at a house in which she then resided, situated in Charlotte Street, Portland Place, the ensuing morning, which his Royal Highness accordingly did, but was not admitted, her servant informing him that she was laid down and asleep: That the same evening his Royal Highness received a note from her Ladyship, strongly expressive of her disappointment that he did not come in, and desiring him earnestly to call again the next day, and to take no refusal of admittance:

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"That his Royal Highness accordingly called upon Lady Horatia the following morning, when he found her in an extremely debilitated state of health; that she appeared for some time overcome with the strong emotions of mind and body which she felt upon his Royal Highness's first appearance, but at length, having attained a degree of composure, she began a conversation with him to the following effect: She first stated how little time she had apparently to live, which her own inward feelings sufficiently warned her of; and when his Royal Highness tried to divert her ideas from such melancholy prospects, she desired him to be silent and not to interrupt her, as she had much to say to him, and could not be answerable how long her powers would enable her to converse at all; and most particularly therefore was she thus anxious, as the purport of what she had to say to his Royal Highness was the request of a dying mother in behalf of her child.

"Lady Horatia then commenced by talking much of Lord Hugh Seymour, and expressed both her own and his Lordship's extreme satisfaction at the renewal of that friendship and good understanding between his Lordship and his Royal Highness, which had existed for so many years (but which for a short period had met with some slight interruption). She then called the Appellant to her, who had been sitting upon the knee of his Royal Highness for some time during the foregoing part of the conversation. She remarked what a lovely sweet babe the Appellant was; how fond the child appeared to be of his Royal Highness, and how extremely his Royal Highness appeared to be attached to the Appellant; she thanked him in very warm expressions of gratitude for the affection he had shown her, and observed how fortunate she had been in meeting with such a friend as Mrs. Fitzherbert had been to her under all circumstances, with whom to leave the child, and not only expressed her strong approbation of the condition she found the child in, but her complete satisfaction at her happy situation under Mrs. Fitzherbert's care.

"She then adverted to a conversation she had had with Mrs. Fitzherbert in consequence of her offer to deliver up the child, and said she doubted not she had told his Royal Highness what had passed; and added she hoped her mind was made easy on that head; she said it wounded her to the heart to think

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what Mrs. Fitzherbert must have suffered whilst making up her mind to deliver up the Appellant; spoke of the handsome manner in which she had proposed it, and said, '*She would not be so unfeeling as to take it from her*,' adding, '*The child knows no other mother than her*, and that she *had directed her to do with it as her own*.' She observed that Mrs. Fitzherbert must be more attached to the Appellant than she could be, having hardly ever seen her, and Mrs. Fitzherbert had had her almost constantly with her from her birth; remarking at the same time that she could hardly have believed, from the state of health she was in at the time of her lying-in, that she could have borne so fine an infant, or expressed herself to that effect: and Lady Horatia then blessed both Mrs. Fitzherbert and his Royal Highness for the extreme affection and care they had each of them shown towards the Appellant; 'but,' added she, 'I have something more, Prince of Wales, to say to you; recollect that it is the last request of a dying mother, and that is that you will take an oath and swear to me most solemnly that you will be the father and protector, through life, of this dear child.' Whereupon his Royal Highness accordingly, without the smallest hesitation, gave his most solemn engagement to her to fulfil to his utmost her request, and Lady Horatia then said that she should 'die content, and that God would reward his Royal Highness for it.' She then appeared to be perfectly relieved, called down the other children, and a short time after the Countess of Euston was announced, when a general conversation commenced, and his Royal Highness shortly after took his leave, and never saw Lady Horatia afterwards."

An affidavit was also sworn to by the Bishop of Winchester, as follows:—

"That in the early part of the then last winter, the Deponent was applied to by letter from Mrs. Fitzherbert stating the circumstances of the Appellant then under her care, expressing her wish that the Appellant should be educated in the principles of the Church of England, and requesting that the Deponent would recommend some clergyman of the Church of England who could attend and instruct her in the principles of that Church.

"That his Lordship accordingly applied to the Rev. Mr. Crofts, preacher at Portland Chapel, who willingly undertook

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that office; and that His Lordship had several times heard from and conversed with Mr. Crofts upon the subject, who assured his Lordship that his employment was attended with great satisfaction and success; that the Appellant had made great progress in the Catechism of the Church of England, had read several books of instruction in the principles of that Church, and promised (as far as a child of her age could promise) to be a firm and steady member of it. That his Lordship had since occasionally seen the Appellant and had heard her read, and conversed with her, and from his own observation was persuaded that the account he received from Mr. Crofts was just and true."

In addition to the Bishop's testimony, there was an affidavit to the same effect from the clergyman appointed to instruct Miss Seymour in the doctrines of the Church of England. There were also affidavits from Sir Walter Farquhar and other eminent physicians to the effect that it would seriously injure the child's health to separate her from Mrs. Fitzherbert; "that she was a child of delicate constitution and great sensibility of mind," and "the warm and parental attentions shown to her by Mrs. Fitzherbert were always returned with a love and affection bordering on adoration." The shock of separation would therefore be so great that the doctors declined to answer for the consequences.

General William Keppel, Governor of Martinique, who saw a great deal of Lord Hugh and Lady Horatia Seymour when they were in the West Indies, also swore that Lady Horatia spoke of Mrs. Fitzherbert frequently with great affection, and said how glad she was that she had charge of her daughter Mary.

This, with some other evidence, chiefly unimportant, was Mrs. Fitzherbert's case. On the other hand, the executors, Lord Henry Seymour and the Earl of Euston, based their claim for the guardianship of the child on several counts, which may be summarised as follows: —

(1.) Because their propinquity of blood gave them a decided preference over Mrs. Fitzherbert.

(2.) Because the child's father, by implication, wished it; that is, he appointed them guardians of his other children.

(3.) Because Mrs. Fitzherbert was a complete stranger in

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blood, despite the friendship and affection which existed between her and the child's parents.

(4.) Because the conversation between the Prince of Wales and Lady Horatia, when it was alleged she confided her child to the Prince's guardianship, had been misunderstood by his Royal Highness.

(5.) Because of the religion of Mrs. Fitzherbert. This the executors declared constituted a positive and unsurmountable objection to her. The affidavit of the Bishop of Winchester by no means removed or diminished their objections.

The Countess of Euston made an affidavit which conflicted with that sworn to by the Prince of Wales concerning his interview with Lady Horatia. Lady Euston testified:

"That she was sitting with Lady Horatia when the Prince of Wales came into the room to visit her in Charlotte Street, and stayed with her until within a few minutes of his taking his leave. That in the evening, when the Countess again visited her, she told the Countess that after she was gone in the morning, the Prince had mentioned Lord Hugh and all her children in a most gracious and affectionate manner, which had made her very happy, as she knew that Lord Hugh had always been very sincerely attached to the Prince, although their friendship had been interrupted for some years, and the Prince's protection might some time or other be of great advantage to her sons, and that Lady Horatia wrote immediately to Lord Hugh (which letter the Countess saw, as well as his answer) expressing his satisfaction at the Prince's gracious message to him, and that Lady Horatia did not mention any other conversation as having passed, either to Lord Hugh or to the Countess."

Lady Euston made a further affidavit with reference to what passed between Lady Horatia and Mrs. Fitzherbert concerning the custody of the child at Portsmouth, when Mrs. Fitzherbert went thither in 1798. This conflicted in some points with Mrs. Fitzherbert's version of the interview. Lady Euston stated that, though she was not present at the interview, she went to her sister immediately after Mrs. Fitzherbert left. "She found Lady Horatia very much out of spirits, and seeming to regret that she had promised Mrs. Fitzherbert the care of her little girl during her absence. She said that she would much prefer her being with Lord and Lady George Seymour,

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but that happened to be inconvenient at the moment, as they were just then changing houses. Lady Euston said that the child could go to Lord and Lady George Seymour after all, as they would soon be settled. Lady Horatia after a pause replied, 'If I now change my mind, Mrs. Fitzherbert will think me unkind and capricious, and it does not much signify, for you know I shall be back in the Spring, and she can only have the child for a very short time.' When Lady Horatia returned to England in June 1801 she intended to have Mary with her, but her health was very bad, and the house in Charlotte Street was so small that she consented to her staying with Mrs. Fitzherbert a little longer, more especially as Mrs. Fitzherbert prayed hard to keep the little one, and grieved greatly at the thought of parting from her. Lady Horatia consented, saying she would not be so unfeeling as to take her away suddenly after all she had done for her, but to Lady Euston Lady Horatia said, 'I shall never cease pitying Mrs. Fitzherbert. She has just told me that she had heard I was coming to England to lye in, and that she had rejoiced at it, thinking that if I had another little girl, I might then have allowed her to keep little Minney. As there was no truth in the report, it was not worth arguing about it, but I think poor Mrs. Fitzherbert must feel that if I had fifty daughters I could part with none of them to her.'"

The Countess Waldegrave, Lady Horatia's other sister, also made an affidavit to much the same effect as Lady Euston, stating that the arrangement of leaving the child in Mrs. Fitzherbert's care was only a temporary one.

The case occupied many months. At last, in February 1805, the Master in Chancery, having considered all the circumstances of the case, reported in favour of Lord Euston and Lord Henry Seymour, and approved of them as guardians of the child. Mrs. Fitzherbert was determined not to be beaten, and, supported by the Prince of Wales, she carried the case to a higher court. It was argued there, but with no better result, for in April 1805 the Lord Chancellor (Eldon) confirmed the report of the Master in Chancery.

Matters now began to look serious, and Mrs. Fitzherbert was in despair at the prospect of losing the child. Erskine, who had been employed with Romilly as Mrs. Fitzherbert's

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counsel in the case in Chancery, advised an appeal to the House of Lords as a last resort. The appeal was duly lodged in 1805, but had to stand over until the next session of Parliament. Shortly after this there was a change in the Government, and Erskine, Mrs. Fitzherbert's friend, became Lord Chancellor in the place of Lord Eldon, who had decided against her. Meanwhile Mrs. Fitzherbert, anxious to leave no stone unturned, had, through the Marchioness of Hertford, with whom she was on terms of friendship, enlisted the sympathies of the Marquess of Hertford. Lord Hertford, as the child's eldest paternal uncle and head of the great house of Seymour, was a most valuable ally, and he and Lady Hertford joined with Mrs. Fitzherbert and the Prince of Wales to prevent little Mary Seymour falling into other hands than those of Mrs. Fitzherbert. The Prince threw himself *con amore* into the fray; he negotiated with the Hertfords, he intrigued with his friends, and before the case came before the House of Lords, he canvassed all the peers for their votes — an unheard-of proceeding, as they were sitting on appeal as judges. However, the Prince's activity met with success, for the whole of the peers promised him their votes, except the Duke of Gloucester, half-brother of Lady Horatia Seymour, Lord Eldon, ex-Lord Chancellor, and eleven others.

The case created great excitement in all classes of society; the rank and peculiar position of the parties contributing to the general interest. When the day came for the case to be argued in the House of Lords, the peers mustered in force; a great number of peeresses were also present, and the galleries were crowded. But those who had come in quest of sensation were disappointed. At the beginning of the proceedings, Lord Hertford intervened, saying it was painful to him, as the head of his house, to have a family matter like this debated by strangers, and if their Lordships would decide that he should be made the guardian of his niece (together with Lady Hertford), he was willing to undertake the charge, on the express understanding that he should be unfettered in its exercise. This was agreed to unanimously; there was no division, for the majority of the peers were obviously on Lord Hertford's side. Lord Chancellor Erskine, therefore, reversed the decree of his predecessor, and the child was handed over to the guardianship

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of Lord and Lady Hertford. Lord Hertford at once requested Mrs. Fitzherbert to act as his deputy, and to continue to show herself, as she had done since his brother's death, a mother to his niece. The rest of Lord Hertford's family, whatever might be their private opinion, could only bow to his decision. Thus ended the great Seymour case, which had occupied from first to last more than three years.

Mrs. Fitzherbert was overjoyed at being assured in the guardianship of her beloved child, and declared that nothing now was wanting to her happiness. All her friends congratulated her, among them being the Duke of Kent, who wrote to her as follows: —

H.R.H. the Duke of Kent to Mrs. Fitzherbert.

"KENSINGTON PALACE,
"*Monday, June* 16, 1806.

"MY DEAREST MRS. FITZHERBERT, — It was fully my intention to have called in Tilney Street yesterday, to have expressed to you all the satisfaction I felt, at the issue of Saturday evening, but was prevented by several people coming in on me unexpectedly whom I was obliged to see. I feel anxious not to delay conveying my sentiments to you any longer, and therefore adopt this mode of so doing lest I should be unable to see you as soon as I could wish. Accept then the assurance of my best wishes on this, as well as on every occasion in which your happiness is concerned, and believe me it is no small gratification to me to reflect that I have had the opportunity of proving, by my conduct, that in saying this, I am far from meaning empty professions.[1] Pray give my love to your *little Angel;* and allow me to subscribe myself with the truest friendship, and warmest regard, my dear Mrs. Fitzherbert, ever yours most faithfully and sincerely,

"EDWARD."

Mrs. Fitzherbert's own feelings are expressed in the following letter which she wrote to Mrs. Browne,[2] a daughter of Lord Thurlow, three days after Lord Hertford's action. Lord

[1] The Duke of Kent had promised his vote and influence in the House of Lords to Mrs. Fitzherbert.

[2] Caroline, natural daughter of Edward Lord Thurlow, married General Browne, an Equerry of the Duke of York.

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Thurlow had from the first interested himself in the case, and had unofficially advised the Prince and Mrs. Fitzherbert.

Mrs. Fitzherbert to Mrs. Browne.

"TILNEY STREET,
"*Tuesday, June* 17, 1806.

"MY DEAR MRS. BROWNE, — Words cannot do justice to the happiness I enjoy at the thought of having my darling child secured to me, after the long series of misery and anxiety I have endured. The good news of my having gained my case, so completely overset me that I have scarce been myself ever since. Thank your dear Father from me a million of times, and tell him I shall not feel my happiness complete till I and my Child in person make our acknowledgments, and bless him for all the interest he has taken, and thank him for all the trouble we have given him. I am going on Sunday out of town for a week to recruit a little, for both my health and spirits have suffered grievously during this persecution. I must tell you that Lady Waldegrave came to town on purpose, wrote to all the press to support her, turned out the people she had let her house to in Berkeley Square and fixed herself in it, telling everybody my poor Child was to go to reside with her on Saturday evening. What a horrid creature she is! Thank God she has been disappointed. Pray say everything most kind to Mrs. Harvey and excuse this hurried scrawl, as I have a hundred notes and letters to write. God bless you. If I can get to you before Sunday, I will; but you know I am not always my own mistress. Adieu, dear Mrs. Browne, and believe me always, very truly and affectionately yours,

"M. FITZHERBERT."

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CHAPTER XXII

"THE DELICATE INVESTIGATION"

(1806–1808)

SOON after the Seymour case was settled, Mrs. Fitzherbert went down to Brighton for the rest of the summer, and took her adopted daughter with her. Lady Jerningham, who was at Brighton, writes (August 10, 1806): "On Sunday last, after I had closed my letter to you, arrived (on foot) Mrs. Fitzherbert and little Miss Seymour, a pretty child of not quite eight years old, and a little taller than Agnes. Mrs. Fitzherbert was very pleasing and conversible, said she imputed her late ill-health to the uneasiness she had undergone over this little girl, that she was particularly fond of children, and should have liked to have had a dozen of her own."

Lady Jerningham then gives an account of the Prince's hospitality at the Pavilion, which may fairly be contrasted with Mr. and Mrs. Creevey's highly-coloured descriptions of the Pavilion entertainments the previous year. Lady Jerningham was an unprejudiced witness, and she finds there nothing but politeness and decorum. She continues her letter:—

"About 8 o'clock I had a note from her [Mrs. Fitzherbert] saying she was ordered by the Prince to desire we would go that evening to the Pavilion, so we put ourselves immediately in proper attire and went at 10 o'clock, the usual hour. The Prince, having dined at Lord Berkeley's with all his set, we found him alone returned, with a Major Bloomfield[1] who is always in attendance upon him. When the door of the Long Chinese room opened, and I saw him and the Major *solus* at the other end, I stopped a minute uncertain whether to enter. He called out '*Come in*,' and then ran down the room to make

[1] Benjamin Bloomfield, first Lord Bloomfield (1768–1846), sometime Chief Equerry to the Prince of Wales, afterwards Keeper of the Privy Purse to George IV.

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excuses for the peremptory order, saying he did not know who was at the door. He then welcomed us all four, and it is really not to be described how amiably polite and fascinating his manners are — on his own ground. The most finished civility, joined to the utmost degree of good-natured affability. . . We were about a quarter of an hour thus, *en Societé*, and then arrived Mrs. Fitzherbert, who told me she had written the note at Lord Berkeley's during dinner, by the Prince's order. Before she arrived, he said to me, 'So you had old *Gruffy* at dinner. How is he?' (Lord Thurlow — I had mentioned to Mrs. Fitzherbert that we expected him.) . . . On the Pavilion nights two rooms are open. There are card tables in the long room, and the Prince's band of German musicians playing in the next. He is uncommonly fond of musick. Mrs. Fitzherbert usually is at cards, Mrs. Walpole also; the other ladies walk about or converse softly, for there reigns a proper subordination in the apartment, and his affability is not abused of." [1]

One of the results of the Seymour case was to revive the prejudice against Mrs. Fitzherbert on account of her religion. The case had excited great public interest, and the decision of the House of Lords was anything but popular. As Lord Hertford had satisfied himself of Mrs. Fitzherbert's good faith in the matter of his niece's religion, and the other members of the Seymour family had bowed to his decision, this matter (which was essentially a family one) should have been allowed to drop. But the press and the public thought differently, and the case, in all its aspects, was discussed for many months afterwards, and into the discussion was imported all the bitterness of the *odium theologicum*.

By the No-Popery party it was thought a terrible thing that a Protestant child should be handed over to the care of a "Papist woman," even though a Bishop of the Church of England superintended the child's religious education; and the Prince's undisguised efforts in the House of Lords helped to make him still more unpopular with that section of the populace. Violent articles appeared in the press, and the Protestant prejudice found vent in the inevitable cartoons. One of them

[1] The "Jerningham Letters."

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was entitled, "*To be or not to be — a Protestant.*" Little Mary Seymour is represented sitting on a sofa, holding a book in her hand, entitled, "A mother's advice to her daughter respecting the true principles of the Protestant religion." Mrs. Fitzherbert is depicted wearing a rosary and crucifix, and having in her hand a book entitled, "Directions from the priests respecting the duty of a true Catholic in converting all." At an open door appears a monk, who thus addresses Mrs. Fitzherbert: "Well done, my daughter, you are now serving our holy religion. You shall next use your influence to procure us Emancipation." The injustice of this is manifest. Mrs. Fitzherbert had taken every precaution to secure that the child should be brought up in the principles of the Church of England, and in advancing the question of Emancipation she took no part whatever. But it serves as a specimen of the abuse and misrepresentations to which she was subjected on account of her religion.

Popular feeling undoubtedly ran high against Mrs. Fitzherbert at this time, and it was increased by the publication of a scandalous production, written by one Jeffries, a bankrupt jeweller, which was circulated far and wide. In 1790, shortly after the unsuccessful struggle for the Regency, when the Prince was sunk in debt and difficulties which Mrs. Fitzherbert shared, the Prince changed his jeweller (always an important functionary with him), the former jeweller not having been sufficiently accommodating in an evil hour. He appointed Jeffries of Piccadilly to take his place. The appointment of jeweller to the Prince of Wales was eagerly coveted, for not only did the Prince buy many jewels for himself and his favourites without ever asking the price, but he occasionally borrowed money at exorbitant interest. Moreover his patronage brought great custom. On one occasion, to defray some pressing debt incurred by Mrs. Fitzherbert on account of the Prince, the Prince borrowed of Jeffries £1600. The Prince, who was always affable, called at Jeffries' shop a few days afterwards and brought Mrs. Fitzherbert with him to thank the jeweller, as he said, "for having accommodated him in that little matter so quickly." Jeffries was much puffed up by this visit of the Prince, but he took a dislike to Mrs. Fitzherbert, because she did not thank him with equal effusion. He perceived "a look of mortified pride on her countenance," which perhaps was natural

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under the circumstances. She instinctively distrusted the fawning creature, and his grievance against her was increased by his inability to induce her to run deeply into his debt. She only purchased jewels of him to the extent of £120, and the money was promptly paid. As the loan of £1600 was also repaid with interest by the Prince, it is difficult to see what grievance the man could have had against Mrs. Fitzherbert. Nevertheless he pursued her with unceasing malignity.

When the Prince's betrothal to the Princess Caroline was announced, Jeffries loudly rejoiced at Mrs. Fitzherbert's downfall, and quoted imaginary conversations he had had with the Prince on the subject. Jeffries received from the Prince an order for wedding jewels, for which he ran up an extortionate bill. He anticipated its payment in full and, his fortune made, he threw up his business. He launched into extravagant expenditure, and contrived to get himself elected member for Coventry, which led a wit to say, "It would seem there was as much disgrace in being sent *from* Coventry as in being sent *to* it." When the Prince's debts came before the Commission appointed by Parliament after his marriage, Jeffries' exorbitant bill came with them, and the Commission docked his charges 10 per cent. This reduction Jeffries declared brought him to bankruptcy, and he seized upon it as an excuse to justify his personal extravagance. He could not meet his bills, and was thrown into prison for debt. He came out two or three years later, with rage and hatred in his heart against Mrs. Fitzherbert and the Prince of Wales, who by that time were reconciled. He then wrote a pamphlet asserting that he had been cheated out of £30,000 by the Prince of Wales, for which he could get no redress. So far from this being the case, he was known to have pocketed a clear £15,000 from the royal patronage. Jeffries upbraided the Prince of Wales and Mrs. Fitzherbert for their "ingratitude," declared that they treated him with contumely, and said that once when he met them walking arm-in-arm on the Steine at Brighton "they regarded him with scorn." It is probable that they never gave him a thought, for Mrs. Fitzherbert barely knew the man by sight. His hatred of her and the Prince amounted to a mania, and no calumnies were too black for his vindictive malice. He seized upon the Seymour case as an opportunity to vent his malignity, but his

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poisoned shafts might have fallen wide of the mark, had it not been for "the delicate investigation."

In 1806 the disagreements between the Prince and Princess of Wales again assumed the form of public scandal. Except for the differences with regard to the Princess Charlotte, differences which for the moment seemed to have been adjusted, the ill-matched pair left each other severely alone. Even those busybodies who concerned themselves with the private affairs of other people seemed content that they should remain so, and the reason given for their separation, incurable incompatibility of temper, was generally accepted as sufficient. The Princess was living at Blackheath, she was received at court with all respect; the King and the nation were on her side, she had many friends, she saw her daughter when she wished, she had all the money she needed. Seeing, therefore, that she had never made any pretence of loving her husband, she was not so much to be pitied. Her position as Princess of Wales was far better than it would have been had she remained at the court of Brunswick. She had only to conduct herself with ordinary discretion, and her future was assured. Unfortunately this was what the Princess could not do. Her unruly tongue, which had already got her into much trouble, was always blurting out some indiscretion. Her conversation was free, open, and coarse, and she discussed with all sorts of men and women, not only the Prince of Wales and Mrs. Fitzherbert, but other members of the royal family, especially the Queen, whom she held up to ridicule as "de old Begum." There was not a spark of malice about her, and a certain ready wit and rough good-humour were apparent in all she said, but what she said did not lose in the re-telling. Her conduct in company, like her conversation, left much to be desired. Without doing anything absolutely wrong, she behaved in the most indiscreet way, and made intimate friends of the most undesirable people. There was about her conduct nothing of dignity and nothing of reticence, and there was much in it which, without being criminal, was highly improper, especially having regard to the difficult and delicate position in which she was placed, a young wife separated from her husband. Her sudden friendships ended not infrequently as suddenly as they began, and in one instance, that of Lady Douglas, culminated in a violent quarrel.

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This woman, in revenge, made a series of slanderous accusations against the Princess, in which falsehood was cunningly mixed with truth. She and her husband, Sir John Douglas, made a declaration concerning the Princess's conduct to the Duke of Sussex in December 1805, and the Duke informed the Prince of Wales. The Prince, "seeing that this matter was such as might affect the royal succession," submitted the declaration to his legal adviser, Lord Thurlow, who, after examining it carefully, told him frankly that he did not believe Lady Douglas's statement. Here the matter, if the Prince and his advisers had been wise, should have been allowed to drop. So far, the Prince could not be blamed. When such a matter was brought before him, he, from his position as heir to the throne, and legally bound to the Princess, was compelled to take some notice of it. Unfortunately, Thurlow, though disbelieving Lady Douglas's statement, advised that evidence should be collected concerning the Princess's general behaviour, which was certainly peculiar. After many months of investigation, a case, or what the Prince considered a case, was made out against her. Even so, no official action was taken until Lord Grenville, Fox, Erskine, and other of the Prince's friends came into office in February 1806. It was they who, at the instance of the Prince, urged the matter on the King, who at last (May 29, 1806) reluctantly consented to the appointment of a Commission to inquire into the Princess's conduct. Lord Chancellor Erskine, and Lords Grenville, Spencer, and Ellenborough conducted this inquiry, which was generally known as "the delicate investigation." Into its details it is not necessary to enter here; suffice it to say that when the Commissioners reported (July 14, 1806), they completely acquitted the Princess of the graver charges against her of criminality, but they added a censure on her general conduct, declaring it to be "such as must, especially considering her exalted rank and station, necessarily give rise to very unfavourable interpretations." The King reserved his decision on this report, and meanwhile declined to receive the Princess either in public or in private. The unhappy woman was driven almost beside herself at this attitude of the King, whom she had believed to be her best friend in England. She had not been allowed to defend herself at "the delicate investigation," but she determined that she

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THE PRINCESS AUGUSTA
DAUGHTER OF GEORGE III.
(*After the Painting by* Sir WILLIAM BEECHEY, R.A.)

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would not be condemned unheard. The popular sympathy with her cause found her powerful friends in the ex-Lord Chancellor Eldon, and Mr. Perceval, soon to be Prime Minister. Guided by these advisers, she drew up an eloquent appeal to the King. Piteous letters also reached him from her father and mother in Brunswick, beseeching him to do justice to their daughter. Still the King, hampered by his Ministers, kept silence. It was not until January 28, 1807, that the Princess received a letter from him, saying that, as the graver charges against her were completely disproved, "he was advised that it was no longer necessary for him to decline to receive the Princess into his royal presence." At the same time he added that there were "other circumstances against her which he regarded with serious concern," and he hoped she would behave better in the future. The Princess could not afford to cavil at this not very satisfactory reply, and she wrote promptly, asking to be allowed to see the King at Windsor. The King replied that London would be more convenient, and he would let her know when he could see her. But at this juncture the Prince of Wales intervened, and said that he had put the matter into the hands of his lawyers, who would show cause why the Princess should not be received at Court. The King was therefore induced to say that he must decline to receive the Princess until the Prince's case had been submitted to him. In other words he postponed the meeting *sine die.*

The Princess then made another impassioned appeal, protesting against "this cruel, unjust, and unreasonable interposition of the Prince." Again she demanded audience forthwith, but to this letter she received no answer. She then declared that she would not be condemned unheard; she would write an account of the whole business, both the accusations against her and her defence, and let the nation judge of the righteousness of her cause. This was prepared under Perceval's supervision, under the name of "The Book." It was printed, and five thousand copies were made ready to be launched upon the town (a few advance copies were privately circulated among Ministers and members of the royal family). Still the Princess stayed her hand, unwilling to publish unless forced to do so; at last, in despair at the delay, she wrote to the King, saying that if she were not received by him before a particular Monday,

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her thunderbolt would be launched on the world. It was at this juncture that the "Ministry of all the Talents" suddenly collapsed, and a new Ministry was formed, which included all the Princess's friends — Lord Eldon, Mr. Canning, and Mr. Perceval. The King adroitly referred the Princess's appeals for justice to them. "The Book" was in consequence held back, and within two or three weeks a Minute of Council was passed which absolutely acquitted the Princess, not only of the charges of cirminality, but "all other particulars of conduct brought in accusation against her." In another Minute the Ministers recommended that she should have apartments allotted to her in one of the palaces, and be treated henceforth in a manner more worthy of her rank and dignity.

Thus was the Princess triumphant all along the line. "The Book" was suppressed, and the printed copies burnt. Apartments were made ready for her in Kensington Palace, she was privately received by the King, and at the very next Drawing-room she was publicly received by the Queen, who must have made a wry face. The Prince of Wales was present at this Drawing-room, and we read, "About three o'clock the Princess of Wales came, elegantly attired. After complimenting her Majesty and the Princesses, she entered into conversation with the Prince, during which there was a profound silence in the room; all eyes were fixed on them. But nothing appeared beyond the forms of politeness; it was therefore conjectured that future connection was impossible."

This desirable consummation was not reached until 1807, after the matter had been violently agitating the public mind for more than a year. That year was probably the most troubled of Mrs. Fitzherbert's troubled life. Though she was absolutely blameless of any share in the persecution of the Princess of Wales, public feeling ran high against her. The Seymour trial had forced her against her will into publicity, and had again directed attention to the fact that she was a Roman Catholic. Close on the heels of the Seymour trial came "the delicate investigation" which, conducted as it was with secrecy and closed doors, inflamed public passion and curiosity to the highest pitch. The wildest rumours flew about. The Prince, it was known, was minded to put away his wife, and the investigation was denounced as a vile plot against the

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honour and life of a poor persecuted woman. Popular opinion was strongly hostile to the Prince of Wales and was ready to believe any story against him and against the "Papist woman" who was living with him as his wife. The pamphlet of Jeffries came out at this time, for he seized on the excited state of public opinion to further calumniate Mrs. Fitzherbert. He declared that she was largely responsible for the persecution of the Princess of Wales, and asserted that she had attempted to bribe witnesses to give false evidence against her. Of course no one of any position credited this base falsehood for a moment, but the mob was not so reasonable.

Lord Carlisle wrote to the Prince of Wales (February 2, 1807): "Though I do not only believe, but *know*, how innocent Mrs. Fitzherbert is of all that has been imputed to her, yet I solemnly declare I consider her situation is becoming most perilous; measuring, as I fancy I do, the feelings and suspicions of many of the lower classes of the people. I hardly have a doubt that with half the mischievous ability of a Lord George Gordon, Mrs. Fitzherbert might at any hour be liable to insult not only in the streets but also in her own house." [1]

Mrs. Fitzherbert was much frightened; not so much on her own account as on account of others. She recalled the excesses of the Gordon riots, and fearful lest history might repeat itself and her house be pillaged and her papers seized, in a moment of panic she tore up the Brief she had received from Rome on the subject of her returning to the Prince, and she mutilated her marriage certificate, her dearest possession, by cutting off the signatures of the witnesses, lest they should be implicated.

There is no doubt that, had the Princess of Wales shown the least encouragement to these rumours, the position of Mrs. Fitzherbert would have been one of danger from mob violence. To the Princess's honour she gave them no credence; she imputed no blame to Mrs. Fitzherbert, and showed her no ill-will. On the contrary, she spoke of her with uniform kindness, and the tumult gradually died away.

The royal family also stood by her throughout the unpopularity brought upon her, first by the Seymour case, and then by "the delicate investigation." They knew that she was

[1] Carlisle MSS. Historical MSS. Commission.

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blameless in regard to the first of these *causes célèbres*, and had nothing whatever to do with the second. Mrs. Fitzherbert continued on friendly terms with the King and Queen, and frequently had informal communications from them. The following letter of the Duke of Kent, written when the turmoil about "the delicate investigation" was at its height, shows the light in which she was regarded by the royal brothers: —

H.R.H. the Duke of Kent to Mrs. Fitzherbert.

"8 *o'clock*,
"*Tuesday mg, January* 17, 1807.

"DEAREST MRS. FITZHERBERT, — Allow me to offer my kindest thanks for your most friendly note. I shall *not* fail to call *this* morning about eleven upon you in the first place, to take my chance of finding you at home, and if I fail, then will repeat my visit later in the day.

"I was at the Queen's House from four o'clock till eleven yesterday. The King was excessively lame from rheumatism, or rheumatic gout, but in *other* respects perfectly well, except having rather a bilious eye. I shall see him before I ride over to Tilney Street, so that you may give the dear Prince the latest and most correct information. Permit me to express the hope that everything relating to our beautiful little fairy [Miss Seymour] is going on as we wish, and so as to relieve your mind from all future uneasiness as to her.

"I remain with the highest regard and esteem, my dearest Mrs. Fitzherbert, ever most devotedly and truly yours,

"EDWARD."

Throughout the anxieties and sorrows to which Mrs. Fitzherbert was exposed during these years, and the years which were to follow, she found comfort and consolation in the society of her ward, Mary Seymour. Mrs. Fitzherbert was devoted to this child of her adoption, who returned her love fourfold. She was of a singularly winning and affectionate disposition, with a brightness and charm which attracted every one to her, and made sunshine wherever she was. It may be truly said that all the happiness Mrs. Fitzherbert knew in the later years of her life came to her through her adopted daughter. The loneliness and reproach of a childless woman was hers, and she

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grieved under it, though perhaps for her own happiness and tranquillity it was as well that she had no children. At first it seemed, too, that this child forged another link between the Prince and Mrs. Fitzherbert; their affection for her certainly brought them both many hours of quiet domestic happiness, such as, in his better moments, the Prince loved. We get a glimpse of their home life in Lord Albemarle's reminiscences, which with advantage may be quoted here. Little George Keppel (afterwards sixth Earl of Albemarle), was staying with his grandmother, the Dowager Lady de Clifford (governess of the Princess Charlotte), in South Audley Street, within a stone's throw of Mrs. Fitzherbert's house in Tilney Street, whither he often went to play with Mary Seymour. He writes:—

"My visits to No. 6 Tilney Street were less intended for the mistress of the mansion than for a little lady of my own age, who even then gave promise of those personal and mental attractions for which she became so distinguished in after life. This was Miss Mary Georgiana, or, as she was called by her friends, 'Minney' Seymour. . . . By my little hostess, I had the honour to be presented to the Prince of Wales, afterwards George IV. His appearance and manners were both of a nature to produce a lively impression on the mind of a child — a merry, good-humoured man, tall, though somewhat portly in stature, in the prime of life, with laughing eyes, pouting lips, and nose which, very slightly turned up, gave a peculiar poignancy to the expression of his face. He wore a well-powdered wig, adorned with a profusion of curls, which in my innocence I believed to be his own hair, as I did a very large pigtail appended thereto. His clothes fitted him like a glove; his coat was single-breasted and buttoned up to the chin. His nether garments were leather pantaloons and Hessian boots. Round his throat was a huge white neckcloth of many folds, out of which his chin seemed to be always struggling to emerge.

"No sooner was his Royal Highness seated in his arm chair, than my young companion would jump up on one of his knees, to which she seemed to claim a prescriptive right. Straightway would arise an animated talk between 'Prinny and Minney,' as they respectively called each other. As my father was in high favour with the Prince at this time, I was occasionally admitted to the spare knee, and to a share in the conver-

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sation, if conversation it could be called in which all were talkers and none listeners." [1]

Another playfellow of little Keppel's and Mary Seymour's was the Princess Charlotte, who at one time occasionally went to Tilney Street; but after these visits ceased, the children continued to meet at the Dowager Lady de Clifford's. Another was Grantley Berkeley, then a boy of about Miss Seymour's age, who often saw her both at London and Brighton. He writes:

"There was also a young lady, very often at the Pavilion, then a child of much my own age, Miss Seymour, who used to play with me, and who considerably won my childish love." He states that he was "rather a favourite" with Mrs. Fitzherbert, and his reminiscences concerning her at this time are interesting: "Among our lady visitors (at Berkeley House) was Mrs. Fitzherbert. . . . She had a peculiar way of standing before the fire that impressed itself strongly on my mind. All the stories circulated about her, and most of all, the caricatures in which she was introduced that were constantly exhibited in the print-shops, attracted me as much towards her as her beauty. I remember well her delicately fair yet commanding features, the gentle demeanour, that exquisite complexion she maintained, almost unimpaired by time, not only long after the departure of youth, but up to the arrival of old age, and her manner, unaffected by years, was equally well preserved." [2]

Yet another of Mary Seymour's youthful adorers was George Fitzclarence, eldest son of the Duke of Clarence and the beautiful Mrs. Jordan.[3] This was a friendship which, begun almost in infancy, lasted through life. Lady Jerningham writes of one of the Prince's birthdays at Brighton: "The band were all morning playing about the town, before our window, the Prince and all his Royal guests walking about, and the two little Fitzclarences and Miss Seymour running." [4] The child was also a favourite with all the royal brothers. She was always "Minney" to them. Indeed she would have been spoiled had

[1] "Fifty Years of my Life," by George Thomas, Earl of Albemarle, vol. i. pp. 238–240. London, 1876.
[2] "Recollections," by the Hon. Grantley Berkeley.
[3] Afterwards first Earl of Munster.
[4] "Jerningham Letters," August 14, 1806.

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not the sweetness of her nature made such a thing impossible. At this time her birthday was celebrated at Brighton in a manner almost royal. We read (1806), "On the night following (Saturday), it being the natal day of the interesting little *protegée* of Mrs. Fitzherbert, Miss Seymour, this young lady gave a ball and supper to a party of juvenile nobility at the Pavilion." A little note of Mrs. Fitzherbert's may be quoted to show the affectionate terms on which she and the Prince and the little girl were at this time:—

Mrs. Fitzherbert to Miss Seymour.

"TILNEY STREET (1807).

"Many thanks, my sweet child, for your letter. I am very glad your cough is better, and I hope when I return I shall have the happiness of finding you quite well. I will deliver your message to 'Prinny,'[1] and 'Wiggy,'[2] when I see them, but I am just going out and am afraid if I don't send my letter now I may be late for the post. I shall certainly be with you on Thursday for dinner. I daresay you will be very glad to have your little friend Sophia Keppel,[3] at Brighton. Pray send and ask her to dine with you on Christmas Day. Give *mille amitiés de ma part à Mlle. Amy*, and believe me, dear Minney, yours very affect[ly],

"M. FITZHERBERT."[4]

In 1807 we find the Prince celebrating his birthday at Brighton with five of his brothers, the Dukes of York, Clarence, Kent, Cumberland, and Sussex, with the usual festivities, such as a review, ringing of bells, roasting of oxen, illuminations. At the review we read, "Lady Haggerston,[5] and Miss Seymour,

[1] The Prince of Wales.

[2] The Hon. G. T. Keppel, afterwards sixth Earl of Albemarle.

[3] Lady Sophia Keppel, daughter of the fourth Earl of Albemarle, who married (1819) Sir James Macdonald, Bart., and died 1824.

[4] For the above letter, written by Mrs. Fitzherbert to Miss Seymour (afterwards Mrs. Dawson Damer), I am indebted to the surviving daughters of the late Mrs. Dawson Damer, Lady Blanche Haygarth and Lady Constance Leslie. I am also indebted to them for other letters quoted in this book, except when otherwise specified, for several of the illustrations duly noted elsewhere, and for much kind assistance, impossible to specify in detail. My indebtedness to these ladies is great.

[5] Mrs. Fitzherbert's sister.

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the Lord Chancellor, Lady Headfort, Mr. Sheridan, and Mrs. Smith [1] (*sic*) were in the Prince's landau. Mrs. Fitzherbert was detained at home by indisposition." It was almost a family party, and it will be seen that Mrs. Fitzherbert's relatives and friends were then in high favour.

In 1808 the Prince also kept his birthday at Brighton, and celebrated it with his brothers by a grand review on the Brighton Downs. The Prince was in Hussar uniform as Colonel of the Tenth Light Dragoons: his sabre was of the richest description, and the sabretache and saddle-cloth were of scarlet, superbly embroidered, and nearly covered with gold. He rode his grey charger, one of the finest proportioned Arabians ever seen in this country. In the Prince's barouche were Mrs. Fitzherbert and Miss Seymour. The Duke and Duchess of Marlborough, Lord and Lady Melbourne, Lord Erskine, and other famous personages were present. "Never," writes the chronicler, "was there such a splendid and brilliant display of company ever seen in this part of the world before." It was memorable in another way, for this was the last of the Prince's birthday celebrations in which Mrs. Fitzherbert took part.

[1] Mrs. Walter Smythe, Mrs. Fitzherbert's sister-in-law.

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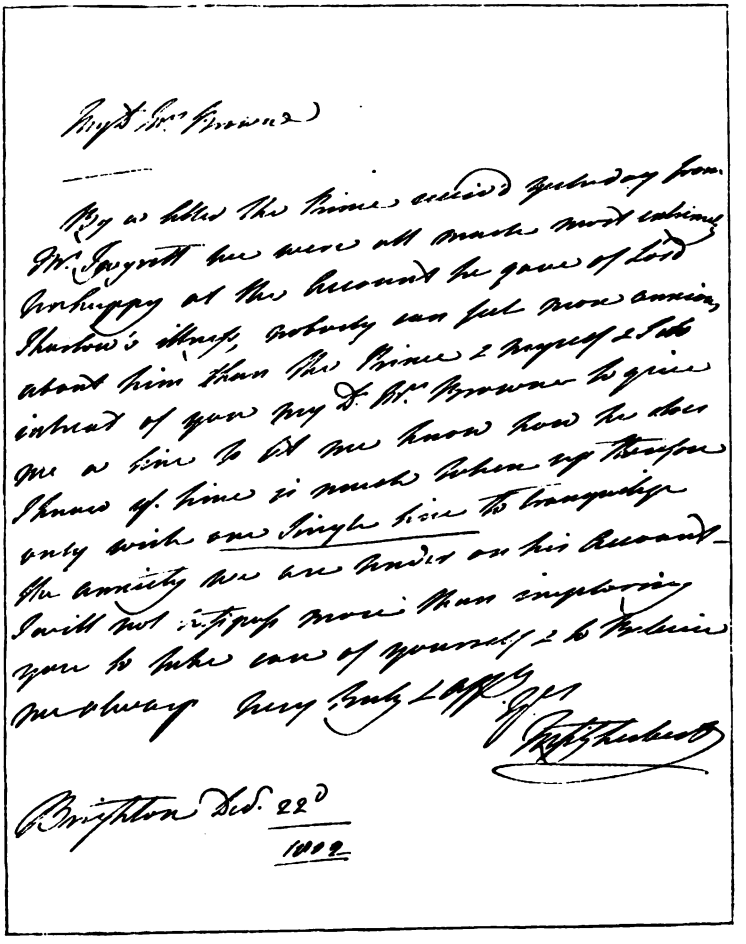

FACSIMILE OF A LETTER WRITTEN BY MRS. FITZHERBERT, SHOWING HER SIGNATURE

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CHAPTER XXIII

THE FINAL SEPARATION

(1808–1811)

MRS. FITZHERBERT'S happiness was now clouded by the intimacy which had sprung up between the Prince of Wales and the Marchioness of Hertford.[1] The fickle Prince was once more bent on supplanting her by another lady, and though for some time there was no open breach between them, their relations gradually became strained. The indirect cause of this unhappy state of affairs arose out of the Seymour case, of which it was aptly said, "It gained Mrs. Fitzherbert a child, but lost her a husband." When the issue of the trial hung in the balance, it will be remembered that Mrs. Fitzherbert had recourse to her friend Lady Hertford, and begged her to intercede with Lord Hertford (as head of the Seymour family) concerning the guardianship of Mary Seymour. The result was that the child was entrusted to Mrs. Fitzherbert's care, but unfortunately this appeal to Lady Hertford led to another development. The Prince of Wales was also concerned in this negotiation, and he saw Lady Hertford frequently on the subject. The impressionable Prince was much attracted to her: their intercourse gradually deepened into intimacy, and so in the Seymour case may be found the origin of an intrigue which ultimately gave Lady Hertford a complete ascendency over the Prince, and drove Mrs. Fitzherbert from the field.

Lady Hertford was a woman of quite different calibre to Lady Jersey; she was correct in her conduct, proud, and reserved. The wife of an enormously wealthy Tory peer, who owned many pocket-boroughs, she was a great lady in politics as well as a leading personage in society. She was an ardent Protestant, and strongly opposed to Catholic Emancipation, on

[1] Isabella, eldest daughter and co-heiress of Charles Ingram, ninth Viscount Irvine, wife of second Marquess of Hertford.

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this point being in direct opposition to Mrs. Fitzherbert. Lady Hertford was a woman of mature age, and she was neither very beautiful nor very clever. But she had a stately presence and superb figure, a dignified carriage and admirable manners. She had a passion for dress, and was said to be the best-dressed woman in London. Except on this last point one would have thought that she had little in common with the Prince of Wales. Yet it was perhaps the opposite qualities in her that attracted him. He did not find her confidence easy to win: she feared for her reputation, and at first she repelled his advances in a way that drove the Prince almost to despair. Creevey tells us that "when he (the Prince) was first in love with Lady Hertford, I have seen tears run down his cheeks at dinner, and he has been dumb for hours." [1] There is no doubt that Lady Hertford's coldness only attracted the Prince the more. He showed all his usual symptoms of being very much in love — tears, prayers, bloodletting, great excitability, letters of enormous length — just as when he was a young man. These symptoms must have been very trying for Mrs. Fitzherbert to witness. She knew them well, but for a time she ignored them, hoping that this love attack would pass in the same way as other *petits amours* of the Prince had passed. She had confidence also in Lady Hertford; she thought her to be her friend, but in time she saw that her confidence was misplaced. Lady Hertford was very vain and inordinately ambitious. To have the Prince at her feet undoubtedly flattered her vanity, but at first it was not easy to see how her ambition could be advanced by listening to his addresses, for the Prince had no power, and very little influence. Indeed, she does not seem to have softened until the Regency was in sight. Like many women, she loved the sense of power, and it pleased her to have people paying her homage, and craving her good offices. It is certain that Lady Hertford never cared for the Prince, but after their friendship became a recognised fact, for some years she ruled him absolutely. He would spend hours at Manchester House, the hours which he used to spend with Mrs. Fitzherbert at Tilney Street. Yet it may be doubted that the Prince's relations with Lady Hertford were ever more than what is absurdly

[1] "The Creevey Papers," vol. i. p. 148. But Creevey was given to exaggeration.

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called "platonic." She was willing to be his Egeria, but she always repudiated the idea that she was his mistress. The Princess of Wales, who followed all her husband's *affaires* with fierce curiosity, declared "that Lady H[ertford] was a woman of intact virtue — it is only a *liaison* of vanity on the part of my better half, but it will not last long — she is too formal for him." [1]

It seems to have been merely an intellectual adultery; but Mrs. Fitzherbert found this more trying to bear than any of the Prince's amours. She saw her influence being slowly undermined, and the Prince's manner towards herself change from warm affection to coldness and indifference. Still she suffered and said nothing, until at last Lady Hertford, who was very jealous of her reputation, discovered that she was being talked about. She then made the Prince insist that Mrs. Fitzherbert should dine at Carlton House or at the Pavilion whenever she dined there, and should always appear at those entertainments where she and the Prince were present. Whether Lady Hertford did this from a desire to humiliate her rival, or only from a wish to protect her reputation in the eyes of the world, the result was equally mortifying to the unhappy Mrs. Fitzherbert. This state of affairs went on for two years, and Mrs. Fitzherbert was forced into being a witness of, and apparently a consenting party to, this intimacy between Lady Hertford and the Prince of Wales — and this despite her tears, entreaties, and expostulations. So wounding was this to her self-respect that she would have refused to be present had not Lady Hertford, who, with her lord, was a guardian of Miss Seymour, appointed by the House of Lords, always held over her the threat that unless she did what she wished she would take away the child. The circumstances, therefore, were of peculiar cruelty. Lord Stourton gives the following account of the situation: —

"Lady Hertford, anxious for the preservation of her own reputation, which she was not willing to compromise with the public, even when she ruled the Prince with the most absolute sway, exposed Mrs. Fitzherbert at this time to very severe trials, which at last almost, as she said, ruined her health and destroyed her nerves. Attentions were required from her

[1] Lady Charlotte Bury's "Diary illustrative of the Times of George IV."

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towards Lady Hertford herself, even when most aware of her superior influence over the Prince, and these attentions were extorted by the menace of taking away her child. To diminish her apparent influence in public as well as private was now the object. When at Brighton, the Prince, who had passed part of his mornings with Mrs. Fitzherbert on friendly terms at her own house, did not even notice her in the slightest manner at the Pavilion on the same evenings, and she afterwards understood that such attentions would have been reported to her rival. She was frequently on the point of that separation which afterwards took place, but was prevented by the influence of the royal family from carrying her resolution into effect." [1]

Bitterly now must Mrs. Fitzherbert have regretted her imprudence in returning to the Prince after his marriage to the Princess of Wales. For her present situation she had largely herself to blame. She now besought the Prince to let her go, but he would not; he wished to keep her, so to speak, in reserve. His vanity would not suffer him to imagine that Mrs. Fitzherbert could ever wish to leave him voluntarily. Now, as always, he was ready to promise her anything, but his promises in private were falsified by his performances in public. At this juncture Mrs. Fitzherbert addressed to him the following pathetic appeal: —

Mrs. Fitzherbert to H.R.H. the Prince of Wales.

"The constant state of anxiety I am perpetually kept in with respect to your proceedings, and the little satisfaction I experience when occasionally you make partial communications to me, have determined me to address you by letter.

"You must be well aware of the misery we have both suffered for the last three or four years on a subject most painful to me, and to all those who are attached and interested about you. It has quite destroyed the entire comfort and happiness of both our lives; it has so completely destroyed mine, that neither my health nor my spirits can bear it any longer. What am I to think of the inconsistency of your conduct, when, scarcely three weeks ago, you voluntarily declared to me that *this sad affair* was quite at an end, and in less than a week

[1] Langdale's "Memoirs."

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afterwards the whole business was begun all over again? The purport of my writing to you is to implore you to come to a resolution upon this business. You must decide, and that decision must be done immediately, that I may know what line to pursue. I beg your answer may be a written one, to avoid all unpleasant conversations upon a subject so heart-rending to one whose whole life has been dedicated to you, and whose affection for you none can surpass." [1]

This letter had no effect. The Prince in private, no doubt, promised amendment, but he still insisted upon Mrs. Fitzherbert's attending the Pavilion, apparently as chaperone to Lady Hertford; and in public, beyond the most formal greeting, he did not take the slightest notice of her presence. Thus she, who had formerly been the reigning lady, hostess in all but name, now found her place usurped by Lady Hertford, and herself expected to assist in the triumph of her rival. Her pride revolted at such a humiliation, and at last she determined to set the Prince at defiance. She sent him an ultimatum. She would go no more to the Pavilion, she said; she would not part with the child, and she vowed that if the Prince thus robbed her of all she loved, or allowed her to be so robbed, she would be driven into retaliation. The Prince, of course, did not dare (it may be doubted if he ever wished) to put Lady Hertford's threat into execution, and take Miss Seymour from her. But he resented in the strongest manner Mrs. Fitzherbert's disobedience to his commands in absenting herself from the Pavilion. The difference between the Prince and Mrs. Fitzherbert was much regretted by the royal family, who still counselled her not to break completely with the Prince. The Duke of York and the Duke of Clarence tried their best to bring about a reconciliation, of course without effect, and only brought the Prince's wrath down upon their heads. The Duke of Kent was wiser, and mindful of the dangers of interfering in quarrels between husband and wife, declined even to discuss the matter with Mrs. Fitzherbert.

[1] This letter, unsigned, was found among Mrs. Fitzherbert's papers after her death. It is evidently a copy of one sent to the Prince, and probably was not burnt with the others, because it was mislaid. It is in Mrs. Fitzherbert's handwriting. I give a facsimile of the original. The date must have been about the end of the year 1809.

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H.R.H. the Duke of Kent to Mrs. Fitzherbert.

"CASTLE HILL LODGE,
"*Saturday, December* 30, 1809.

"MY DEAREST MRS. FITZHERBERT, — I have this moment received your very kind letter, which, agreeable to your request, shall be shown to the Prince the very first time I see him, which I expect will be either Monday or Wednesday. In the meanwhile, however, I must beg to assure you that, in the conversation alluded to between my brother and me, I never *did* understand that you had made use of my name as being acquainted with, or sanctioning, your intention of absenting yourself from the Pavilion. Indeed, if any such suggestion had been dropped, I should have conceived it as arising in error, as there could not be the slightest foundation for it, it having singularly so happened that I have not had the pleasure of seeing you since August, and that the only time you did me the favour to write, was solely upon my own concerns, unconnected with any other circumstance whatsoever. However, what has passed on this occasion renders it absolutely necessary for me to implore you, whenever I have the happiness of seeing you (which I must say is a very great gratification to me at all times, from the kind and affectionate interest you have ever shewn me), that we *never* should touch upon that most delicate subject — the state of things between the Prince and yourself. Then I shall always be able, as I am now, conscientiously to say that you have never sought to intermeddle *me* in it, which I well know will always be the furthest thing from your thoughts. In venturing to say this, I do it with the more confidence as I am sure you will never suspect my silence on that *one* subject to proceed from a want of interest about it, when I owe so much to both parties for all the kindness I have ever experienced from them. . . .

"To yourself I scarcely need add that I shall ever remain bound by every tie of friendship and attachment, and that I hope you will believe the sincerity of my professions when I repeat the sentiments of warm regard and high esteem, with which I ever am, my dearest Mrs. Fitzherbert, yours most faithfully and devotedly,

"EDWARD."

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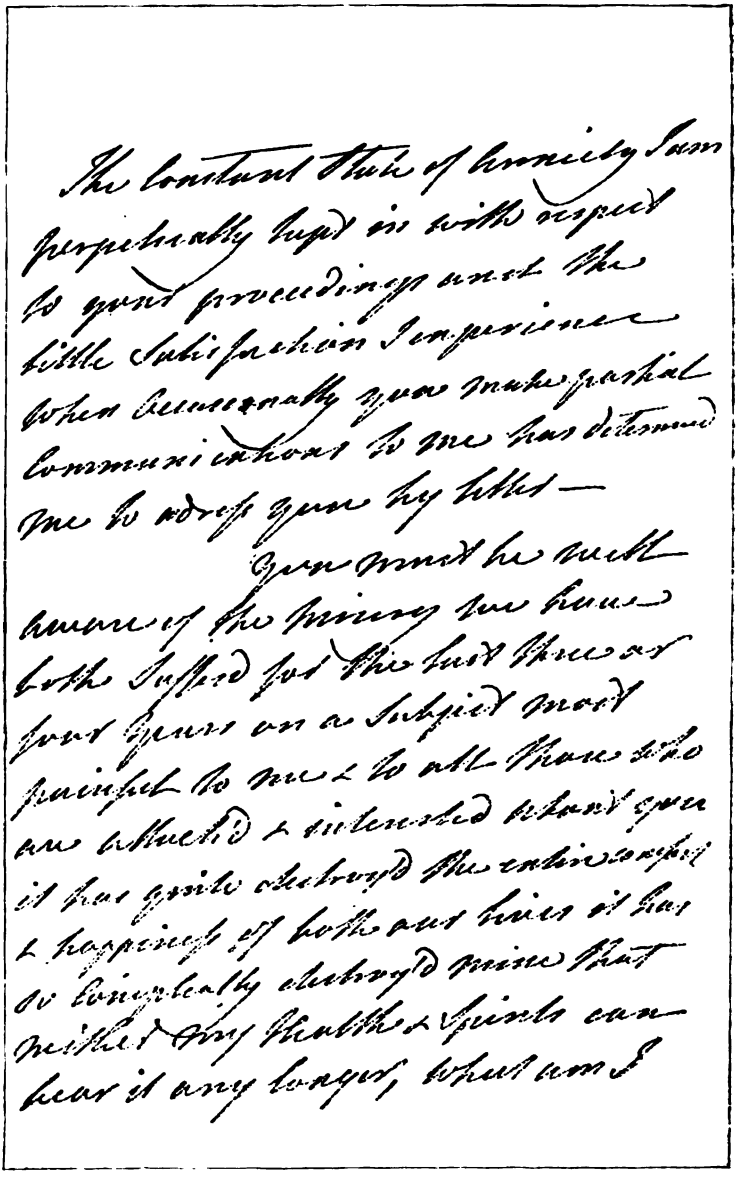

FACSIMILE OF A LETTER WRITTEN BY MRS. FIT
BEFORE THEIR F

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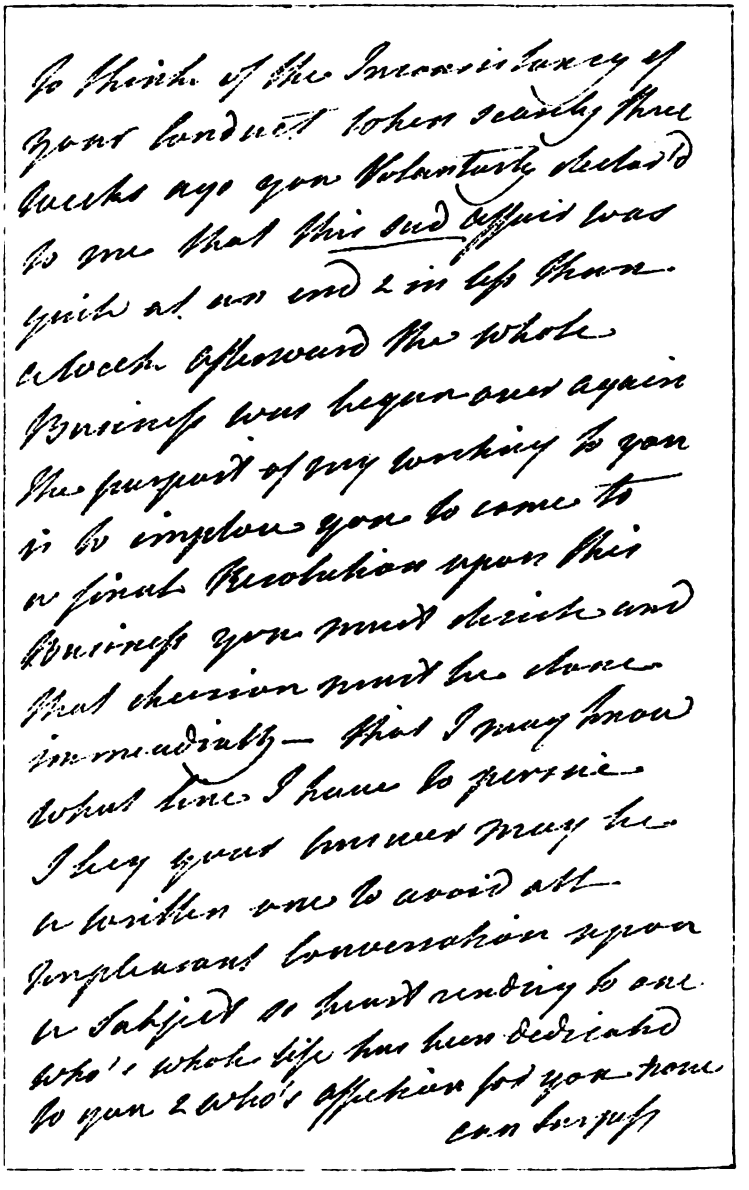

CHERBERT TO THE PRINCE OF WALES SHORTLY
NAL SEPARATION

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Mrs. Fitzherbert's determination to go no more to the Pavilion widened the breach between her and the Prince. They were now virtually separated, and he fell more and more under the dominion of Lady Hertford. Presently it was whispered everywhere that Mrs. Fitzherbert's influence over him was gone. This was what the Prince wished, and indeed had been the true reason of his treating her distantly in public. There was one thing the Prince dearly loved, and that was popularity. For the last few years he had been steadily growing more and more unpopular. This was due wholly to his own misconduct, and more particularly to his treatment of the Princess of Wales, but his self-esteem would not admit that he could possibly be to blame, and it pleased him to think that it was on account of Mrs. Fitzherbert and her religion. Lady Hertford had artfully insinuated that his close connection with a Roman Catholic, especially at a time when Catholic Emancipation was the burning political question, must surely do him harm with the country, and that it was most desirable for public reasons that Mrs. Fitzherbert should be relegated to the background. This advice the Prince listened to eagerly, for it coincided with his inclination. Hence arose the many slights he put upon the unfortunate Mrs. Fitzherbert in public, all for the purpose of showing that he was no longer under the influence of a Roman Catholic.

Mrs. Fitzherbert's quarrel with the Prince coincided with a time of great public excitement and a dangerous crisis in the royal family. She was deprived, too, of the advice of her best friend, the Duke of York, whose time was wholly occupied just then by his own affairs. The Duke's conduct as commander-in-chief was brought before Parliament in connection with the notorious Mrs. Clarke. This woman was accused of trafficking in promotions, and she said, untruly, that she had done so with the knowledge and connivance of the Duke. The public scandal raised in connection with this Parliamentary investigation was very great. It is not necessary to enter into details; suffice it to say, that the Duke was acquitted of the graver charges of corruption, but he felt bound to resign for a time his appointment as commander-in-chief. Mrs. Fitzherbert's sympathies were all with the Duke, and she wrote to him, receiving the following reply: —

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H.R.H. the Duke of York to Mrs. Fitzherbert.

"STABLE YARD,
"*Tuesday evening, August* 8.

"A thousand thanks, my dear Friend, for your kind note. Be assured that I am truly sensible of your friendly anxiety about me. I am, thank God, tolerably well in health, and bear up, as much as I can, under present circumstances. As soon as I am able to free myself, you may depend upon your being one of the first persons upon whom I shall call. Yours most affectionately,

"FREDERICK."

The King's reason had long trembled in the balance; his domestic griefs, added to his public anxieties, hastened the crisis. The changes in the Government, and the proceedings against his favourite son, the Duke of York, had driven him nearly insane; but the crowning blow was the death of his beloved daughter, the lovely Princess Amelia, who died November 2, 1810. The old King's mind gave way utterly under this last sorrow. Doctor John Willis was again called in, this time without result. Despite all efforts at concealment, it soon became known that the King was hopelessly insane. The Queen and Perceval, the Prime Minister, endeavoured to follow the precedents of 1789 — to grasp all the power they could, and fetter the Prince of Wales as much as possible. But this time the Prince was too strong for the Queen. For one thing, the King was twenty years older, and there was no ray of hope that he would recover; for another, Perceval was not Pitt. It is true that temporary restrictions on the Regency were carried by narrow majorities in Parliament, but every one knew they were not worth the paper they were written on, and when the Prince agreed to accept the Regency, he did so under protest, so far as the restrictions were concerned. The next question was, who would form the new Government, for it was supposed on both sides of the House that the Prince would begin his Regency by dismissing Perceval and the Tories, and call in Lords Grey and Grenville, and his friends the Whigs. But the Prince, when pressed for a definite declaration, asked for time to consider. He had made his peace with the Queen, who told him that a change of Government at this juncture would cer-

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tainly kill the King. This made the Prince shed tears; and with a great show of devotion to the King, he declared he was ready to sacrifice his personal preferences to the welfare of the State. The truth was, the Prince in his heart did not want the Whigs in office. He disliked Lords Grey and Grenville quite as much as he disliked Perceval, and he had already thrown over Catholic Emancipation, to which the Whigs were pledged. Still he affected to hesitate.

It was at this juncture that he sent for Mrs. Fitzherbert, who was then at Brighton. She must have been considerably surprised to receive the royal summons. Since she had absented herself from the Pavilion contrary to the Prince's command, she had rarely seen him. Public affairs claimed his attention, and his leisure was now spent wholly with Lady Hertford. The breach between him and Mrs. Fitzherbert had widened into a virtual separation; in political affairs, she was not consulted; in the intrigues which gathered around the King's illness, and the Prince's claim to the Regency, she had this time taken no part. Lady Hertford was supreme. When, therefore, the Prince, on the eve of assuming the Regency, expressly sent for her, she must have thought he wished to see her on some matter personal to herself. Perhaps he was at last going to fulfil his promises, and, now that he had the power, make her tardy compensation for the wrongs she had suffered. Such a thought may well have passed through her mind as she drove up to London. But when she arrived at Carlton House, and was ushered into the presence of the Regent-elect, she found that it was on quite a different matter that he wished to see her. Lord Stourton gives the following account (which he had from Mrs. Fitzherbert) of this interview: —

"He [the Prince] told her, that he had sent for her to ask her opinion, and that he demanded it of her, with regard to the party to which he was about, as Regent, to confide the administration of the country. At his commands, she urged, in the most forcible manner she was able, his adherence to his former political friends. Knowing all his engagements to that party, she used every argument and every entreaty to induce him not to sever himself from them. 'Only retain them, sir, six weeks in power. If you please, you may find some pretext to dismiss them at the end of that time; but do not break with them

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without some pretext or other.' Such was her request to him. He answered, 'It was impossible, as he had promised;' but at the same time she observed he seemed much overpowered by the effort it cost him. Finding that resistance to a determination so fixed was unavailing, she asked to be allowed to return to Brighton, which she did; but previously to leaving him, she said, that as he had done her the honour of imposing on her his commands of freely declaring her sentiments upon this occasion, she hoped he would permit her, before she left him, to offer one suggestion, which she trusted he would not take amiss.

"She then urged upon him, as strongly as she was able, the disadvantages which must accrue to his future happiness from treating his daughter, the Princess Charlotte, with so little kindness. 'You now, sir,' she said, 'may mould her at your pleasure, but soon it will not be so; and she may become, from mismanagement, a thorn in your side for life.' 'That is your opinion, madam,' was his only reply." [1]

It is not easy to see what were the Prince's motives in sending for Mrs. Fitzherbert at this time. He did not want her advice on the political situation, for his mind was made up before she came, and he did not follow the advice she offered. Perhaps he wished to convey to her by his manner, for he lacked the courage to tell her frankly, that now, when he was about to be vested with authority and power, their old confidential relations must cease, and any intercourse between them henceforth be distant and formal. Perhaps it was only vanity, for he was one of the vainest of men; he wished her to see him in his new *rôle* as Regent-elect, and impress her accordingly. Perhaps (for we will give him the benefit of the doubt) his love for her may have flickered up again: he wished to see her, and the pretext of consulting her on political matters was merely an excuse to save his dignity. She had been his faithful companion through storm and stress for many years, and even he, the most ungrateful of men, could hardly cast her aside in his hour of prosperity without a word. It is possible that had she humbled herself before him, had she wept, or reproached him, he might have shed on her some rays of his favour; but she

[1] Langdale's "Memoirs:" "Lord Stourton's Narrative," pp. 143, 144.

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was apparently too proud, and felt herself too deeply wronged, to even allude to their personal relations during the interview. Pride stood in the way. They parted without a word on the subject which was probably nearest their hearts, and when the doors of Carlton House closed behind Mrs. Fitzherbert, the opportunity of reconciliation was gone for ever.

A few days later it was announced that the Prince had decided to keep on Mr. Perceval and the Tories, and this decision, it was well known, was due in the main to the influence of Lady Hertford and the intrigues of Manchester House.

On February 5, 1811, the Prince of Wales took the oaths required of him as Regent, and formally entered on his nineteen years of rule — nine as Regent and ten as King. The beginning of his Regency may be regarded as coincident with the ending of his connection with Mrs. Fitzherbert; for though he had occasional communications with her until a later date, yet with his assumption of the Regency their married life finally closed. There were many reasons for this, some private and some political. The chief private reason was, of course, the influence of Lady Hertford; the political one was the question of Roman Catholic Emancipation.

This question had been shelved by Pitt, who, though convinced of its justice, promised George III. never to bring it forward during his lifetime; it was a subject on which the King felt so deeply that any discussion of it was likely to upset his sanity. He threatened to abdicate rather than give his assent to such a measure, which he regarded as a breach of his coronation oath. So great was the respect entertained by many of the leading Roman Catholic laity for the King, that they fell in with Pitt's views, and would never have urged the question so long as it endangered the health of the King. But now that the King was hopelessly insane, and his son had become Regent, the situation changed, and Emancipation was again forced into the forefront of practical politics. In his youth the Prince of Wales had allowed it to be understood that he favoured the Roman Catholic claims; and though he did not positively declare himself, he wrote, spoke, and acted as though he approved of Emancipation. His friendship with Fox, who was the great champion of toleration, his close connection with Mrs. Fitzherbert, and his intimacy with many Roman Catholics,

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helped to foster the belief. It may be doubted if the Prince had ever any settled convictions on the subject, and his apparent approval of this reform may have been dictated chiefly by a desire to annoy and oppose his father. Mrs. Fitzherbert never discussed the subject in public, and if it came up in the course of conversation she always put it aside. Of course there was no doubt that her sympathies were with those of her faith, though she refrained from taking any active part, and certainly did not influence the Prince. So the question slept in the Prince's mind until he came under the influence of Lady Hertford. Lady Hertford seems to have persuaded him that he would gain popularity by the No-Popery cry, and one of his first acts, after assuming the Regency, was to make it generally known that he was strongly opposed to the Catholic claims. The surest way in which he could emphasise this was by letting the world see his close intimacy with the ultra-Protestant Hertfords, who were leaders of the anti-Emancipation movement. It was necessary also that he should show publicly that he was no longer under the influence of the Roman Catholic Mrs. Fitzherbert.

The Regent sought an occasion of publicly demonstrating this, and the opportunity soon came. Always a lover of display, he determined to inaugurate his Regency by a splendid *fête* at Carlton House. The *fête* was ostensibly given in honour of the exiled royal family of France, though the real reason was to display the Regent's magnificence, and to make a parade of his generosity. The date was fixed for June 19, 1811. For weeks before nothing was talked of in the *beau monde* but the coming *fête;* it was rumoured that no court entertainment so splendid had ever been given within living memory, and there was a great rush for invitations. It was at first said that no one was to be asked under the rank of a peer's son or daughter, but that limitation gave offence, and was cancelled. In all some two thousand invitations were sent out. Mrs. Fitzherbert received an invitation. As this was the first time she was to make a public appearance at the Regent's house since his assumption of the Regency, she was naturally anxious to know how she was to be received. She had no intention of submitting again to the slights which had caused her to absent herself from the Pavilion. She made inquiries in a well-informed

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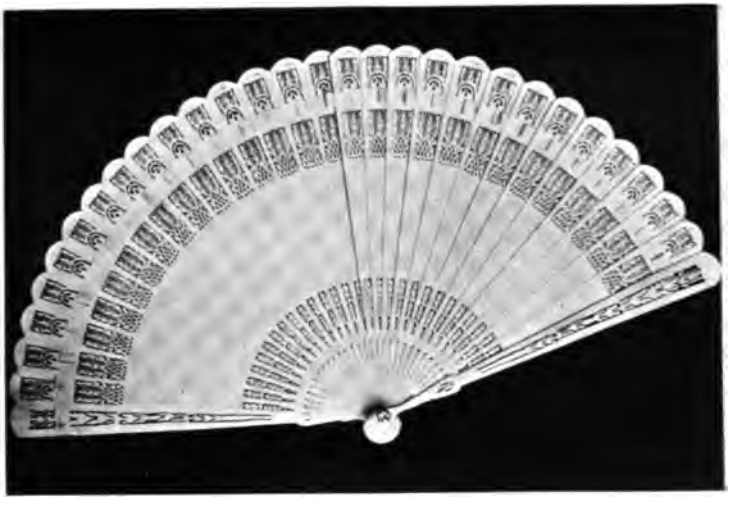

(1) IVORY FAN GIVEN BY THE PRINCE OF WALES TO MRS. FITZHERBERT

(2) SATCHEL EMBROIDERED BY MRS. FITZHERBERT AT THE AGE OF SEVENTY-FIVE

(*By permission of* Mr. JOHN HARRIS)

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quarter, and discovered that there was to be a royal supper-table, accommodating a large number of distinguished guests, including the French royal family, those members of the English royal family who were present, and persons especially honoured by the Regent, including of course Lord and Lady Hertford and their son, Lord Yarmouth. To this table Mrs. Fitzherbert was not bidden, and she learned that if she went to Carlton House, she would be left to fight for her supper at a buffet with the general company. The omission was the more marked, because, "on all former occasions, to avoid etiquette, in circumstances of such delicacy as regarded her own position with reference to the Prince, it had been customary to sit at table regardless of rank." This had always secured her a seat at the Prince's table, and she was very tenacious (perhaps unduly so) of this small concession to her peculiar position. The Regent had always promised that when he had the power he would do everything to put her right with the world; but now, so far from doing this, he was even taking away the slight privileges hitherto conceded to her. This change of place she had no difficulty in tracing to Lady Hertford, and she regarded it as "a systematic intention to degrade her before the public."

Mrs. Fitzherbert would not, however, believe that this humiliation was to be offered to her unless she heard it from the Regent's own lips. With characteristic courage she went to Carlton House, and demanded of the Regent where she was to sit. He said, "You know, madam, you have no place." "None, sir," she replied, "but such as you choose to give me." Deeply mortified, she withdrew. She determined that she would not go to the *fête*, and she told those of the royal family who were her friends of her determination. The Duke of York and other of the royal brothers endeavoured to get the Regent to alter his arrangement of the table in Mrs. Fitzherbert's favour, but they found him inflexible. He held that the exceptional courtesy the Prince of Wales had extended to her in such matters could not be continued to her by the Regent at his court. He could no longer waive the rules of precedence in her favour, nor could he set the etiquette of the court at defiance. He had no wish to exclude her from the *fête*, but he wished her in future to understand her place. Mrs. Fitzherbert, however, declined to fall in with his arrangements; she held that she

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occupied a position *sui generis*, and was therefore entitled to exceptional treatment, so she stayed away. Under these altered circumstances she declined to attend his court.

The "other wife," the Princess of Wales, was not invited at all. She took the neglect very good-humouredly, declaring that she "was like an Archbishop's wife, who does not partake of her husband's honours;" she allowed the ladies of her suite to go, and to show that she bore no malice gave them new dresses for the occasion. The Princess Charlotte was also excluded on the ground of her youth, which, as she was now fifteen, she thought "very hard." Magnificent and wonderful was the Carlton House *fête*, vying in splendour with a coronation banquet, or Belshazzar's feast. London talked of nothing else for weeks afterwards — such dresses, such jewels, such decorations, such a dazzling display of female beauty, such princely hospitality had never been seen before. The Regent was in his element presiding over all this splendour, and his exquisite courtesy to the exiled royal family of France was the theme of universal admiration. But the distinguished absentees were noticed as well as the distinguished guests, and the *mot* ran round the brilliant assembly that the "two wives were sitting at home."

The Carlton House *fête* brought matters to a crisis between the Prince and Mrs. Fitzherbert. She was cruelly wounded by his broken promises and unchivalrous treatment, he was exasperated by her refusal to obey his commands. The royal family had long opposed her desire for separation, but now, "aware of the peculiar circumstances of her case, and the distressing nature of her general situation, they no longer hesitated to agree with her, that no advantage was to be gained by further postponement of her own anxious desire to close her connection with the Prince, and to retire once more into private life." The last time that Mrs. Fitzherbert met the Regent, before their final separation, was the day after the Carlton House *fête*, at an assembly at Devonshire House. "The Duchess of Devonshire, taking her by her arm, said to her, 'You must come and see the Duke in his own room, as he is suffering from a fit of the gout, but he will be glad to see an old friend.' In passing through the rooms she saw the Prince and Lady Hertford in a *tête-à-tête* conversation, and nearly fainted under

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all the impressions which then rushed upon her mind; but, taking a glass of water, she recovered and passed on." [1]

Soon after this incident a formal separation was agreed upon; the Duke of York acting as intermediary between the parties. In this matter Mrs. Fitzherbert took the initiative; it was she who wished for a final separation, not the Regent. It has been said that he wished for it also, and made her position intolerable so as to throw the onus upon her. There seems no proof of this. The Regent certainly wished, on personal as well as political grounds, to put Mrs. Fitzherbert on one side, until such time as it should suit his royal will and pleasure to bring her forward again. If she was reasonable he had no desire to break with her wholly. But Mrs. Fitzherbert would not fall in with the Regent's plan, so wounding to her self-respect and her honour. She, who regarded herself as his true wife, refused to play the *rôle* of complaisant mistress, and dance attendance on the houri of the hour, to be ignored one day and smiled upon the next, according to the royal pleasure of her Sultan. For the last few years her life had been one of misery. So long as the Prince had stood by her, she had bravely borne all the anxieties, misrepresentations, abuse, and popular execration which arose from her connection with him; but when he turned upon her and ill-treated her, her fortitude gave way, and her health became broken by the treatment she received. In truth she was tired. She could not go on any longer; even had her spirit been willing, her bodily strength would have failed her. She was now fifty-five years of age, and after all she had gone through, she might reasonably look forward to a few years of peace and quietness before she died. She was no longer quite alone, for her adopted daughter was with her. In the negotiation for the separation, Mrs. Fitzherbert made only one stipulation, namely, that she should retain the guardianship of Miss Seymour. The Regent made no objection; he knew that Miss Seymour was in the best possible hands, and he had never seriously thought of taking her away from Mrs. Fitzherbert. The money question had been solved some three or four years previously, when the Prince's attachment to Lady Hertford first became manifest. The will which

[1] Langdale's "Memoirs."

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the Prince had made in Mrs. Fitzherbert's favour in 1786, as well as the pension of £3000 a year guaranteed her in 1784, had been commuted for an annuity of £6000 a year, guaranteed by a mortgage on the Pavilion at Brighton.[1] In this matter Mr. Errington again acted on behalf of his niece, but it would seem she owed her pension to the good will of the Queen and the Duke of York. Lord Stourton says: —

"To the Duke of York and the Queen Mrs. Fitzherbert was indebted for £6000 a year in a mortgage deed, which they procured for her on the Palace at Brighton: being aware, as she said, that till that period she had no legal title to a single shilling should she survive the Prince. Indeed, at one period she had debts on her own jointures, incurred principally on account of the Prince. . . ."[2]

The Regent cleared off these debts also without demur. Indeed, as the Duke of York afterwards testified, he seemed glad to do whatever was asked, so far as money went. The houses in Tilney Street and at Brighton were Mrs. Fitzherbert's own property; she had besides her separate jointure. The arrangements for the separation were soon completed, and from that time, to quote Lord Stourton, Mrs. Fitzherbert "never opened the door of her house" to the Regent. There was no public separation, and very few people knew the facts. Mrs. Fitzherbert was not given to talking about her affairs, and the Regent naturally did not care to say much about it. Conscience was never quite dead in him, though its voice was dulled by flattery and self-indulgence. Even when their relations were most strained he had silently rendered her the homage which vice, often unwillingly, pays to virtue. Though passion was long dead, he still retained for her feelings of respect. He knew her to be a good woman, and in his heart of hearts he regarded her as his wife. Another person thought her his wife also — no other than the poor persecuted Princess

[1] This document, dated March 16, 1808, is entitled, "Device for securing the payment of an annuity of £6000 a year during the Prince's lifetime: His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales and Henry Errington, Esq., in trust for Mrs. Fitzherbert." It was placed by Mrs. Fitzherbert in 1833, with other papers, in Coutts's Bank. It appears on Langdale's list as "No. 1. The mortgage on the Palace at Brighton." Langdale, *op. cit.*, p. 87. It is purely a legal document, and not necessary to be quoted here.

[2] Langdale, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

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of Wales, whose turn was to come next. "The Princess of Wales," wrote Lady Charlotte Bury, "speaks highly of Mrs. Fitzherbert. She always says, 'That is the Prince's true wife. She is an excellent woman: it is a great pity he ever broke with her.'"

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CHAPTER XXIV

THE REGENCY

(1811–1820)

In the brilliancy of the Regency Mrs. Fitzherbert had neither part nor lot. This is not the place to review the glories of that period, its beaux, its dandyism, its extravagances in costume, its affectations in manners, all of which owed their origin to the Regent. The Georgian era was already slowly dying, but it was dying in a blaze of meretricious splendour. Left to himself, separated from the only woman who cared for him, her restraining influence gone, the Regent now let himself drift down the slopes of self-indulgence and sensual gratification, which brought him eventually to a miserable end. With no one to foster his good impulses, or to encourage him in the paths of duty, he became in private life the selfish voluptuary, and in politics the weak vacillating creature of his later years. From the day of his separation from Mrs. Fitzherbert can be traced a steady deterioration both in body and mind. It was the Nemesis of his treatment of her.

Lady Hertford must be regarded as the *dame regnante* of the Regency. Not a day passed, when the Regent was in London, but he visited her; and his brougham, with the purple blinds close drawn, was a familiar sight as he drove to Manchester House. Lord Hertford held high posts at court; he was appointed the Lord Chamberlain and given the Garter. His son, Lord Yarmouth, also held appointments at court. He was a noted dandy who set the fashion in dress, and became the Regent's chief adviser in matters sartorial. His red whiskers and his title earned for him the nickname of "Bloater."[1] The

[1] He succeeded his father as third Marquess of Hertford. He married the celebrated Maria Fagiani. He was the original of Thackeray's Marquess of Steyne in "Vanity Fair." Disraeli portrayed him more truly in "Coningsby" as Lord Monmouth.

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Duke of Cumberland, a Protestant of the most Orange type, had taken the place of the Duke of York as chief adviser to his eldest brother. The Duke of York rarely saw the Regent, and so Mrs. Fitzherbert lost for a time her best friend at court.

Mrs. Fitzherbert might have consoled herself with the thought that if she took no part in the Regent's magnificence she had also no share in his annoyances. These as time went on became very great. The question of the Regent's household expenses and his debts was never satisfactorily settled, and proved a chronic source of irritation. His continued excesses told upon his health — he was nearly always unwell; his growing corpulency wounded his vanity and defied all his efforts to check it. In political matters he was ever shifty and vacillating; neither side would trust him, and he bid fair to fall between the two stools of Whig and Tory. He had fallen into the hands of unworthy favourites, and, swayed first by one and then by another, he hardly seemed to have a will of his own. His domestic affairs became daily more exasperating to him. Time avenged the slighted counsels of Mrs. Fitzherbert with regard to the Princess Charlotte. She had warned the Regent of the evil consequences of treating his daughter with so little kindness, and her words were abundantly justified. The high-spirited girl, stung by her father's injustice, and alienated by his harsh treatment, openly espoused the cause of her mother. In vain the Regent interposed to check the intercourse between them — the young Princess defied him. Not daring to punish her as he wished, he retaliated on her mother, who was compelled to leave Kensington Palace, where she had been placed by George III., and had to retire to a small house in Connaught Place. Ill in health, worried by his debts, and harassed by domestic quarrels and countless annoyances, some sympathy must be extended to the unfortunate Regent. The women of his family were especially troublesome, and they were by no means so easily disposed of as Mrs. Fitzherbert had been. It was all his own fault, of course, but surely never was man so plagued by women before. His mother, feeling that her power was slipping away, was, as the Speaker said, "voracious in her claims," and worried her son even when he was ill; his sisters, usually so patient, had at last spoken out, and were clamouring

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for the money to set up separate establishments of their own; his daughter was in rebellion, and his consort was making him an object of popular contempt. Thus he, the magnificent Regent, presented the undignified spectacle of a man contending against all the women of his family.

Chief among all these women in revolt was the irrepressible Princess of Wales; she was a perpetual thorn in the side of her husband. Now that the Regent had declared open war by turning her out of her house, she delighted in thwarting him, and in making him appear ridiculous and contemptible. She wounded him in his tenderest part — his vanity. Despite her trials the Princess of Wales preserved an undaunted spirit; she seemed rather to enjoy the strife, and she breathed forth threatenings and defiance against her husband. Popular feeling was wholly on her side, and on the side of the Princess Charlotte. "Don't desert your mother, dear," shouted the mob when she drove in the streets, and the young Princess responded with bows and smiles. The Regent was attacked by the press in language of unparalleled violence and scurrility. When he opened Parliament not a cheer greeted him, and cries of "Down with the Regent!" were by no means infrequent. The Regent ascribed all this to the Princess of Wales; his hatred of her became a mania, and once he was goaded into the following undignified exclamation. Some one at Carlton House was holding forth about the victories of the Duke of Wellington in the north. The Regent burst out, "Damn the north! and damn the south! and damn Wellington! The question is, *how* am I to be rid of this damned Princess of Wales?" That was a question that was not solved for many a long day. But the Regent took it into his head that since the King, her protector, was laid aside, he might on some pretext or other divorce the Princess of Wales and marry again. By such a marriage he might be rid of his detested wife, and (if the gods gave him a son) of his rebellious daughter. It has been said that this was one of his reasons for separating from Mrs. Fitzherbert, as the question of his marriage with her might have been raised again, and so interfered with his plans. But that marriage had proved no obstacle in his way when he had espoused the Princess of Wales, and he was hardly likely to consider it seriously, now when he wished to get rid of her. But the Princess, supported

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by her daughter, and with popular sympathy on her side, was not so easily got rid of.

There is no need to enter here into the details of the struggle which followed. For five years the Regent was engaged in ceaseless disputes with the Princess of Wales and his daughter, and the scandal of these quarrels brought him ever-increasing unpopularity. In August 1815 the Princess of Wales, worn-out by the long strife, committed the fatal mistake of leaving the country. Soon after her departure a reconciliation was patched up between the Regent and the Princess Charlotte, and in the following year (1816) she was happily married to Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha. Unfortunately, their happiness did not last long; on November 6, 1817, the Princess Charlotte died in childbed, after giving birth to a still-born child, to the overwhelming grief of the nation. Just a year later (November 1818), Queen Charlotte died. Her death attracted scarcely more than passing notice, and she was little mourned by her children, and not at all by the public.

Through all these vicissitudes in the royal family, Mrs. Fitzherbert had no communication with the Regent. She lived in retirement, and the years of her life, coincident with the Regency, yield less information than any others. Since this period of her life was uneventful, let us hope that it was happy. She adopted the same line of conduct she had pursued at the time of her previous separation. She went on with her ordinary life just as though nothing had happened, whatever her sufferings were in private, and maintained a smiling face to the world; no word of reproach against the Regent crossed her lips, and if ever she mentioned him to her friends, it was with respect. The Regent no longer went to her house, nor did she appear at his parties; but as this state of affairs had been going on more or less for two years, it excited little comment. So, for some time after the separation was an accomplished fact, people in general had no idea that it had taken place. An amusing instance of this occurred at Cheltenham, where Mrs. Fitzherbert went in 1812 to drink the waters. A public entertainment was given in honour of the Princess Charlotte's birthday, to which she was invited, and went in duty bound. The *gauche* colonel who acted as master of ceremonies led her in to supper before all the other ladies present; he later made a speech in

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which he alluded to her as "the Regentess," and in order to make things pleasant all round, he proceeded to praise the Regent, his consort the Princess of Wales, and the Princess Charlotte, whom he described as "the lovely fruit of their union." Mrs. Fitzherbert sat through it all with smiling composure.

Mrs. Fitzherbert during these years found great happiness in the training and education of her adopted daughter, Miss Seymour, and in the affection which existed between them. The guardianship of her ward was assured to her by the Regent by the terms of their separation, and Mrs. Fitzherbert had no longer to fear any opposition from the Seymour family. So amiable and conciliatory had been her conduct towards them, that they were now quite reconciled, even those who were at first most opposed. Miss Seymour's elder brother, George, was one of these. He writes, "In my early life I was so much at sea that I seldom saw Mrs. Fitzherbert, but when on shore I had always occasion to admire the maternal kindness with which she treated my sister; it was exemplary, and she endeavoured to do what she considered my parents would have deemed of greatest importance, which was allowing Protestant instructors to visit my sister regularly, and avoiding any effort to induce her to become a Catholic. As years drew on, my former objection to her home being with Mrs. Fitzherbert weakened, when I saw how consistently her kindness to my sister was administered; her house was always open to my brothers and myself, and she always consulted me about my sister's welfare." [1] Miss Seymour well repaid the love which Mrs. Fitzherbert lavished on her. She returned her affection, and cheered the loneliness of her life. She grew up a most attractive and striking girl, full of grace, wit, and natural *gaieté de cœur*. She possessed in a marked degree that indefinable quality called charm, which attracted all people to her. The Countess Grey, writing to her daughter, Lady Georgiana Grey, thus spoke of Miss Seymour: "I always find it impossible to leave her; I do not know what charm she possesses; I have seen cleverer people, and yet to me she is more captivating than they are. It seems

[1] Admiral Sir George Seymour, G.C.B. This quotation was made from a memorandum written by Sir George Seymour at Lady Georgina Bathurst's request. I am permitted to quote from it by members of the family.

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to me that being agreeable is a gift from Heaven which is not to be attained, and happy are those who possess it."

For six years, until 1817, the year Miss Seymour came out, the greater part of Mrs. Fitzherbert's life was passed in retirement. Soon after her separation from the Regent, she bought a villa on the Thames, with a large garden, Sherwood Lodge, Battersea — a district very different then to what it is now — and there much of her time was spent. Both she and Miss Seymour delighted in the garden, and found in it an interest and an occupation.[1] At Sherwood Lodge Mrs. Fitzherbert gave garden parties during the summer, and entertained her friends. Among her guests was the Prince of Holstein, who wrote to her of "ce temps gai que j'ai si souvent passé dans votre maison." The royal dukes often visited her at Sherwood Lodge, especially the Duke of York, who had helped her to choose this place of retreat. He wrote her in reply to her congratulations on his birthday: —

H.R.H. the Duke of York to Mrs. Fitzherbert.

"BRIGHTON, *August* 20, 1812.

"Accept my best thanks, my dear Friend, for your very kind letter, which only reached me yesterday, as well as all you are so good as to say to me on the anniversary of my birthday. Be assured that I am fully sensible of this fresh proof of the steady friendship which you have upon all occasions evinced for me for so many years. You know that there is no one more sincerely attached to you, or feels a more lively interest in everything concerning you, than I do. I am rejoiced to learn that you are so well pleased with, and feel yourself so comfortable at, Sherwood Lodge; from what I could judge of the place, when I saw it with you, I am certain it was capable of being made very pretty, and I shall be very anxious as soon as I return to town to see all your improvements. Ever yours most affectionately,

"FREDERICK."

The Duke of Kent, who was at this time living abroad, did

[1] "Mrs. Fitzherbert (says the *Morning Post*) is one of the most scientific botanists in the kingdom, and her *protegée*, Miss Seymour, is not deficient in that way." — *The Brighton Gazette*, September 24, 1824.

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not forget his old friend in his voluntary exile, as the following letter will show: —

H.R.H. the Duke of Kent to Mrs. Fitzherbert, Sherwood Lodge, Battersea.

"BRUSSELS, *Friday, December* 20, 1816.

"MY EVER DEAREST MRS. FITZHERBERT, — It is now four months since I left England, and rather more than that since I took my leave of *you*. During the first half of that time I have been a great traveller, and little able to write to any one; and during the two last months I have been so taken up with the necessary details to make myself comfortable, that I have been only just able to reply to those of my correspondents who have written to me here — amongst the number of whom it would have been a very great comfort, from all the attachment and affection I bear you, had I found that *you* too had thought of me. . . .

"I shall now give you a hasty sketch of my proceedings since I left you, and commence by saying that I left dear Castle Hill at 3 o'clock on the 19th of August. . . . I was detained here (in Brussels) till the 12th September last most unfortunately, owing to the non-arrival of my servants, equipage, and baggage, but it was well I stayed, for after I turned my back very little was done to this old mansion I occupy, until my return — all the workmen being called off to prepare for the court, who were to arrive about the third week in October. On the 12th September, however, I set out accompanied by Lieut.-Colonel Müller of my regiment, in my travelling baroutsch, with my valet, and one footman on the box and another in the corner, and passing through Liege, Aix-la-Chapelle, Cologne, Coblentz, and Mayence, I reached Frankfort on the 15th. There I stayed three days on account of meeting my old uncle, the *then* reigning Duke of Mecklenburg-Strelitz (since dead), and went in company with him to visit the Landgrave of Hesse-Homburg, whose eldest son was an old German companion of mine. There I saw a fine-ish young woman, a Princess of Anhalt-Dessau, granddaughter of the old people, who is talked of as my brother Adolphus's future bride, but perhaps with as little foundation as that odious Princess Amalia

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of Baden, whom I find the papers have thought fit to give to *me!*

"From Frankfort I went to Darmstadt, where I passed an evening with my old acquaintances the Grand-Duke and Dutchess (formerly a celebrated beauty), by whom I was most hospitably received. The next day I went to Carlsruhe, where I saw the *old Madam* above alluded to [Princess Amalia], who is twin-sister of the Queen of Bavaria, sister of the Empress of Russia, of the ex-Queen of Sweden, of the Hereditary Grand Dutchess of Hesse-Darmstadt, and of the deceased Dutchess of [illegible]. But from her being the *only one* of he six sisters left on hand at the age of *forty-one*, and the eldest *too*, you may judge how little *desirable* she is. I must, however, say that I was most hospitably and magnificently entertained by the Landgravine, her mother, and was compensated for the *ennui* of her company by becoming acquainted with that most lively, fascinating little creature, Stéphanie Beauharnais, now Grand Dutchess of Baden, her sister-in-law.

"On the night of the 21st I left Carlsruhe, after a *séjour* there not exceeding thirty hours, and reached Stuttgard to breakfast on the 22nd, when you will easily imagine the pleasure my sister[1] and myself experienced after a separation of more than one-and-thirty years. I remained *with her* till the 3rd of October, I *may* say *comblé de politesses et d'attentions* from her husband, and with many proofs of affection from herself.

"I had then intended going by way of Strasburg and Luxemburg straight to Cambray, the original intention of the Duke of Wellington having been to hold his grand review on the 11th or 12th; but the lateness of the harvest obliging him to postpone it till the 21st, I found I had just time to run over to Paris. . . . And so proceeding first to Würzburg to pay a visit to the Prince Royal of Bavaria, who married a cousin of ours, a very sweet woman, I pushed on by the route of Mannheim, Metz, and Verdun to Paris, which I reached on the 8th of October. The only incident that I met with worth noticing at Würzburg was my becoming acquainted there with the Empress of Austria, one of the plainest, yet one of the most pleasing, mannerly women, I have ever met with. . . .

[1] Charlotte, Queen of Wurtemburg, eldest daughter of George III.

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"I was most kindly received (in Paris) by all the royal family. I had two audiences of the King, and dined with him once. I also dined once with the Dutchess-Dowager of Orleans, once with the English ambassador, and once with the Hanoverian Minister — all the other days at home. My evenings I generally went to the theatre in a private box, and the morning I devoted to seeing those objects that I considered most deserving of attention, accompanied by ——, a very intelligent young man. I had thus the good fortune to be able to inspect everything with great comfort, being perfectly *incog.* except at Versailles, St. Cloud and Les Invalides, where I was, of course, obliged to appear with some one from the court to attend me. In short, the day was never long enough for all I had to do, and I left a great deal to see for another time.

"I left Paris on the 19th for Cambray, taking on my way Chantilly and Compiègne. At the former place I saw the old Prince of Condé, much broke, yet apparently happy and resigned; notwithstanding the dreadful state of the weather and the ground, on the morning of the 23rd at 6 o'clock we separated, he being bound for Paris and I to Brussels. Here I have remained ever since, except going once, on November 2nd, to take my Birthday dinner with the officers of my own Corps *at their request*, and upon which occasion the Duke of Wellington and Lord Hill came over from Cambray to meet me. . . . The court was already arrived here on my return from my journey. I was received by the King, Queen, Prince of Orange and his young wife, and Prince Frederick his brother, with every possible mark of politeness and good-humour. I am asked to dine, or sup, with them whenever they have any public party, but this is rare, as the court live uncommonly retired by choice, perhaps more so than is good for the sake of establishing a degree of popularity in the new capital. Otherwise I accept no invitations, as there is such a mixture of company of all countries and politics in this place, that it would be quite impossible to discriminate; and I only invite occasionally four, but oftener two, friends to dinner, to have my rubber of whist at what evenings we don't go to the theatre, where, by-the-bye, the performance is very passable. . . .

"I continue to be an early riser, but not so early as I was at home, for I now rise at ½ past 6, or ¼ before 7, instead of at 5

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as I used to do; and I am seldom out of bed after 11, the theatre rarely being over later than 10, and all parties, except amongst *our* countrymen, breaking up about the same hour. Thus you see I am living most quietly, and I trust contentedly, in the full spirit of my plan of economy and retrenchment. My house, though old, thanks to painting, papering, whitewashing, carpeting, and putting up a number of stoves, is very tolerably comfortable, totally *isolé* from any other, not overlooked, and with a fine flower garden and small shrubbery, a good deal of fruit on the wall and on standards, and I have the advantage of having all my horses, equipages, and stablemen within my own yard.

"I had intended running over to England for about three weeks at the end of October, or beginning of November . . . but now I look forward to the *probability*, though not to the *certainty*, of paying you a visit in the spring. But whether I do so or not(after my presuming to bore you with so long a letter about *myself*, which nothing could warrant my doing but my confidence in your regard for me) do not doubt the sincerity of that lasting and warm attachment, with which I am, my dearest Mrs. Fitzherbert, ever your most faithful, devoted, and affectionate

"EDWARD."

Though Mrs. Fitzherbert made Sherwood Lodge her summer residence during these years, she was also sometimes in London and often at Brighton. It was for the sake of Miss Seymour that she still kept in touch with the world instead of retiring from it altogether (as her own inclinations tempted her to do), so that she might the better introduce her ward into the society worthy of her birth. The effort cost her much, but she was then, as always, supported by her friends; her social position had gained rather than lost by her separation from the Regent — at least among those of her friends who were worth having. We get glimpses of her during this period in contemporary memoirs and letters. We find her in 1813 at a party given by Lord Clifford in honour of the Duke of Sussex, who was the royal duke who expressed himself strongly in favour of Emancipation. All the Roman Catholic *élite* were there, yet even among them the precise state of Mrs. Fitzherbert's relations with the Regent was not known. "Some say," writes Lady

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Jerningham, "that the Prince does not see her any more, others that he divides his favours equally."[1] Again, the Dowager Lady Verulam writes to Mary Frampton (July 2, 1814): "We met yesterday *the* Mrs. Fitzherbert and her *protegée*; she was driving herself in one of the fashionable carriages; they have four wheels and one horse and go at a great rate. One could not help moralising, as the road she was on was the very one on which the Princess of Wales was driven almost every day in her phaeton."[2] We find Mrs. Fitzherbert in 1814, the same week that the Princess of Wales left England, leaving Brighton for Paris with Miss Seymour, doubtless to avoid the Regent, who was coming to Brighton to entertain his mother Queen Charlotte on his birthday. Though she avoided him as much as possible, an occasional meeting was unavoidable. For instance, in 1815, about a fortnight before the Battle of Waterloo, they met in London at a ball given by the Countess of Ailesbury. The Regent arrived about one o'clock, and remained for an hour. He saw Mrs. Fitzherbert, but he took not the slightest notice of her, and we are told that she was "dreadfully overcome." On the other hand, a year or two later, Sir Henry Holland tells us, "I witnessed once, when meeting the Prince Regent and Mrs. Fitzherbert in the same room at Bridgewater House, that rejection of every intercourse on *her* part which gave origin to so many anecdotes, true or false, on the subject."[3] Mrs. Damer (*née* Seymour) in after years related to one of her daughters that one evening at a great party in London — I believe at Devonshire House — she and Mrs. Fitzherbert were going up the stairs, and met the Regent face to face coming down. He stopped to speak to Miss Seymour with his usual kindness, but Mrs. Fitzherbert passed on, as though regardless of his presence, neither did she show any sign of agitation. From this it would seem that if the Regent would not speak to Mrs. Fitzherbert, neither would she speak to him. Probably they had tacitly agreed to ignore one another.

The Regent's resentment against Mrs. Fitzherbert (if he cherished any) did not extend to Miss Seymour, whom he

[1] "The Jerningham Letters," *op. cit.*
[2] "The Journal of Mary Frampton," *op. cit.*
[3] Sir Henry Holland's "Memoirs."

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always treated with kindness. Sir George Seymour writes, "During the two years" (after the Seymour case), "the Prince continued to be much at Mrs. Fitzherbert's; his fondness towards Mary was continually shown — afterwards he rarely saw her. He usually sent her a small birthday present, and on the day when she attained her twenty-first year he addressed a note to her to say that when she was very young he had put by £10,000 for her, and was happy to find the interest had increased to make it nearly £20,000. He therefore enclosed a draft on Messrs. Coutts in her favour for that sum. This was generous on the part of His Royal Highness, and unexpected, as when his offer to settle that sum on her, on condition that the guardians left her with Mrs. Fitzherbert, was refused, the offer was supposed to have dropped with the refusal." [1]

The Regent went comparatively seldom to Brighton at this period, and Mrs. Fitzherbert frequently. After Miss Seymour came out, he always invited her to the parties he gave at the Pavilion, if she were at Brighton, and Mrs. Fitzherbert wished her to go, though she herself no longer went there. For instance, we find Miss Seymour at the Pavilion on January 7, 1817, the last birthday of the Princess Charlotte. "The ball," we read, "was opened by the Duke of Clarence and Lady Cholmondeley, Prince Esterhazy and the Hon. Miss Seymour, [she is always thus styled in the local papers], to the lively tones of stringed instruments and the tambour, and kept up with unflagging spirit, with interval for supper, until nearly six A.M." The following week the Grand-Duke Nicholas of Russia, afterwards the Emperor Nicholas I., arrived at the Pavilion on a visit to the Regent, and splendid entertainments were given in his honour. Again we read: "The Grand-Duke's partner during the ball was generally the Hon. Miss Seymour, ward of Mrs. Fitzherbert." Mrs. Fitzherbert also gave a dance at Brighton, at which "a select circle of fashionables were present."

This year (1817) Mrs. Fitzherbert and Miss Seymour went to Paris [2] for some time. In Paris Mrs. Fitzherbert was well received by the French royal family, who treated her with

[1] Memorandum of Admiral Sir George Seymour, G.C.B.

[2] "The French papers say, 'Madame Fitzherbert, who is extensively known in England for her excellent qualities, has arrived in Paris, where she intends to reside for some weeks.'" — *Brighton Herald*, October 4, 1817.

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great respect. They regarded her as the morganatic wife of the Regent; Roman Catholics themselves, they knew that most of her troubles had arisen from her steadfastness to her religion, and they honoured her accordingly. Also, when the Orleanist Princes were in England, Mrs. Fitzherbert saw a good deal of them, and entertained them with her usual hospitality. Louis Philippe wrote to her shortly before his return to France a letter in which he said, "I thank you with all my heart for your past, present, and *future* kindness to me, for which I am very grateful," [1] and when she came to Paris he did his best to repay that kindness.

Mrs. Fitzherbert was back in Brighton for Christmas and for the New Year (1818). The Regent was also there, but he was ill, and in low spirits, and all the gaieties of the Pavilion were suspended on account of the court mourning. But he superintended the decorations of his banqueting room and the music room; his passion for pulling his house about continued unabated. Croker, who was visiting Brighton at this time, seems to have thought that the secluded life led there by the Regent was due to the presence of Mrs. Fitzherbert. He makes the following ill-informed remarks in his Journal: "I cannot but wonder at her (Mrs. Fitzherbert) living here and bearding the Prince in a way so indelicate, *vis-à-vis* the public, and, I should have thought, so embarrassing to herself. To her presence is attributed the Prince's never going abroad at Brighton. I have known H.R.H. here seven or eight years, and never saw or heard of his being on foot out of the limits of the Pavilion, and in general he avoids even riding through the principal streets. I cannot see how poor old Mrs. Fitzherbert . . . can cause him any uneasiness." [2]

That the Regent had no feeling on the subject, is shown by his asking Miss Seymour to the Pavilion. The habit of retirement was growing on him, and was to lead before long to an almost oriental habit of seclusion, not only in Brighton, but also in London and at Windsor. Croker also writes in his Journal a day or two later: "One reason why Mrs. Fitzherbert

[1] Letter of Louis Philippe to Mrs. Fitzherbert, dated Twickenham, July 18, 1815, signed "Yours affectly, L. P. d'Orleans."

[2] "The Croker Papers: The Correspondence and Diaries of the Right Hon. John Wilson Croker, &c." Edited by Louis J. Jennings, 1884.

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may like this place is that she is treated as queen, at least of Brighton. They don't quite *Highness* her in her domestic circle, but they *Madam* her prodigiously, and stand up longer for her arrival than for ordinary folks, and in short, go as near to acknowledging her for *princess* as they can, without actually giving her the title. When she dines out she expects to be led out to dinner before peeresses — mighty foolish all this! The Duke of York still keeps up a correspondence with her, for Seymour mentioned she had had a letter from his Royal Highness this morning. I daresay the Prince would not be much pleased if he knew this." [1]

Croker exaggerated, but Mrs. Fitzherbert was undoubtedly treated with peculiar deference by her friends, not only at Brighton, but elsewhere; it was the only way they could show her their sympathy and mark their disapproval of the Regent's ill-treatment of her, for no allusion to *the subject* ever crossed her lips.

The death of the Princess Charlotte had made a great difference to the position of the royal brothers. The Duke of York, Mrs. Fitzherbert's great friend, had now become heir-presumptive to the throne. He had no children by his marriage, and the Dukes of Clarence, Kent, and Cambridge were unmarried. The Duke of Cumberland had married the previous year, and the Duke of Sussex had contracted a "left-handed" marriage. As it was thought necessary to provide for the succession, the Dukes of Clarence, Kent, and Cambridge made haste to be wed. The necessary princesses (German, of course) were found; and within the year that followed the death of the Princess Charlotte, the three Royal Dukes were duly espoused. The Duke of Clarence married Adelaide, Princess of Saxe-Coburg-Meiningen, the Duke of Kent married Victoria Mary Louisa, daughter of the Prince of Saxe-Saalfeld-Coburg, and widow of Charles Louis, Prince of Leiningen, and the Duke of Cambridge married Augusta, daughter of Frederick of Hesse-Cassel.

The Duke of Kent's marriage made no difference to the feelings of friendship that he entertained for Mrs. Fitzherbert, for we find him writing again a few weeks after it had taken place: —

[1] Croker, *op. cit.*

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H.R.H. the Duke of Kent to Mrs. Fitzherbert.

"KENSINGTON PALACE, ½ *past 2 o'clock,*
Tuesday afternoon, August 25, 1818.

"MY EVER DEAREST MRS. FITZHERBERT, — Having at length the prospect of being able (if you will admit me towards 7 or 8 o'clock this evening) to spend half-an-hour with you, perhaps the only moment I may have (as in fact it has been hitherto) before I leave England, I send this over by a messenger to say that I will take my chance and call at your door, at all events. In the meantime, pray do me the justice to believe that you have *never been out of my thoughts*, and that nothing but the situation I have been placed in for the last seven weeks, could have made me either abstain from writing, or calling, until now. Neither time nor situation can alter the warmth and sincerity of my attachment for you.

"Remember me kindly to dear Miss Seymour, and accept the assurance of all that unalterable, lively, and friendly regard, with which I shall remain to the latest hour of my existence, my ever dearest Mrs. Fitzherbert, your most affectionate and devoted

"EDWARD."

Mrs. Fitzherbert saw the Duke of Kent; it was the last time they met.

Shortly after this the Duke went abroad, but he returned to England the following spring, in order that his child might be born in England. The Princess Victoria was born on May 24, 1819, at Kensington Palace. The amiable Prince, her father, died on January 23, 1820, when the Princess Victoria was only eight months old. The Duke of Kent's death was followed six days later by one of greater importance in the royal family. The old King George III. died at midnight on January 29, 1820, and the Regent ascended the throne as George IV.

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GEORGE IV. AT THE TIME HE ASCENDED
THE THRONE

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CHAPTER XXV

THE TRIAL OF QUEEN CAROLINE

(1820–1821)

THE accession of George IV. brought little change to him except a change of title, for all the essential attributes of kingship had been his during the Regency. It brought, however, an addition of income (though not sufficient for his needs) and some increase of prerogative. As King he was able to indulge more freely in the pageantry so dear to his heart. Vested in purple and gold he opened Parliament, seated on a new throne.

One of the King's first acts was to try to get rid of his Queen. The unfortunate Caroline had been living abroad since 1814; her erratic conduct had given occasion for scandal, and after the death of her daughter she seems to have become reckless. She played into the hands of her enemies. George IV. had long cherished a plan for divorcing her, and when death removed the Princess Charlotte, her only true friend and protectress, he lost no time in putting it into motion. He appointed a secret committee to watch Caroline's conduct abroad, and collect evidence against her; she was pursued by spies and subjected to insult. When the King came to the throne the British ambassadors and ministers at foreign courts were instructed not to recognise her as Queen-Consort, and her name was left out of the Liturgy. These tactics, coupled with a rumour that action was to be taken against her, determined the Queen to return to England and meet her accusers face to face. This, of all things, the British Government was anxious to prevent. Ministers had already advised the King not to attempt to divorce his Queen; they now tried to bribe her with an offer of £50,000 per annum to stay abroad and forego the title and prerogatives of Queen-Consort; and they threatened her with criminal proceedings if she returned to England. The bribe

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was never satisfactorily explained to the Queen; her advocate Brougham seems to have played in this matter a double part, and her answer to the threats of the King and the Government was to defy them and to set out for England at once. Thus would an innocent woman have acted, conscious of her innocence. The intrepid Queen landed at Dover on June 6, 1820; she was welcomed with a royal salute thundered out from the Castle, the commandant having had no instructions to the contrary; the whole population of the town turned out to greet her; she was received with frantic cheers and acclamations of delight. When she set out for London that same evening, a crowd followed her; the horses were taken out of her coach, and the people drew her for some distance out of the town. Her journey from Dover to London was a royal progress. At Canterbury she was met by a torchlight procession, tumultuous applause, and an address of welcome; she lay there the night, and next morning proceeded on her way. As she drew near London a vast cavalcade came out to meet her; the road was lined with tens of thousands, who shouted themselves hoarse, and when she passed over Westminster Bridge the cheers of the multitude sounded inside the walls of Parliament like the roaring of the sea, and warned the King's Ministers of the dangers and difficulties of the course on which they had entered. The Queen's popularity was overwhelming; the masses of the people were on her side; they considered her to be a persecuted woman, the victim of a base plot against her honour and perhaps her life. The mob, who cheered her whithersoever she went, did not care greatly whether she were innocent or guilty; they admired her courage, they were indignant at her wrongs, and they detested her persecutor.

The day after the Queen's arrival in London, the portentous "green bag," supposed to be filled with evidence against the Queen, was carried down to Parliament. The question whether it should be opened or not formed the subject of impassioned debate. The King invited the House of Lords "to give serious attention to the charges against his consort." The Queen sent a message to the House of Commons protesting against the evidence of the hired spies and secret agents, who had sought to destroy her honour and peace abroad. She declared that she had returned to England to confront her persecutors; she

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denounced all attempt at secrecy, and demanded an open trial. Frightened by her intrepid demeanour and the popular ferment, attempts were again made by the Ministers to arrange matters with the Queen, and the following offer was submitted to her: — She was to have an income of £50,000 a year, an "official announcement of her position" was to be given to foreign courts, and addresses were to be presented to her from both Houses of Parliament. On her part she was to leave England as soon as possible in a King's ship and to reside abroad; her name was not to appear in the Liturgy. Had these terms been offered to the Queen while she was still abroad she would have no doubt accepted them, but her overwhelming popularity in England had turned her head. Four delegates from the House of Commons waited on her at Lady Anne Hamilton's house in Portman Square, where she was staying, with these offers. She received the deputation "sternly and haughtily," insisted on her full rights as Queen-Consort, and rejected all compromise. When it was known to the crowd outside that she had refused, their shouts might have been heard at Charing Cross. The popular enthusiasm of the multitude was greater than before; even the army began to shout, "The Queen for ever!" As Luttrell wittily said, "the extinguisher was taking fire."

The Queen's refusal was made on the 22nd June. As she would accept no compromise, Ministers, having gone so far, had no option but to go further. They could not withdraw from the position they had taken up. Accordingly, the green bag was opened and its contents examined by a parliamentary committee. This committee reported on the 4th July, and the "Bill of Pains and Penalties" was introduced by Lord Liverpool, the Prime Minister, in the House of Lords on the following day. This Bill was to deprive the Queen of her rights and privileges as Queen-Consort, and to dissolve the marriage between her and George IV. on the ground of her adultery. The first reading passed as a matter of form, the Queen protesting by counsel; the second reading was fixed for August 17.

The Queen moved to Brandenburg House, Hammersmith, and there waited the opening of the trial. She did not pass the interval in quiet retirement, but daily received deputations and addresses from all sorts and conditions of men and women;

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she heartily welcomed these signs that the people were on her side, and professed herself undaunted. But it must have been an anxious time with her; it was scarcely less anxious for the King.

There was also a third person who was only a degree less concerned in this trial than the principals — Mrs. Fitzherbert. In November, 1819, Mrs. Fitzherbert, accompanied by Miss Seymour, had gone to Paris for a stay of some months, intending to return to England in the spring. Tom Moore in his Diary mentions meeting her at a party in Paris on Christmas Day, 1819. "Mrs. Fitzherbert, too, who I thought had cut me, gave me a very kind greeting."[1] He met her again, March 10, 1820, at Madame de Flahaut's, who was an Englishwoman, and had married the former French ambassador in England, and was now one of the most popular hostesses in Paris.[2] The news of the old King's death, and of George IV.'s accession, reached Mrs. Fitzherbert in Paris. The event made little difference to her, for the King continued to her the same income he had guaranteed to her when Regent, and their relations towards one another had long since crystallised into an amicable separation. But Mrs. Fitzherbert knew that, with a character as vacillating as George IV.'s, one could never be sure what developments might arise, and she was preparing to return to England when the news reached her that the King intended to divorce his Queen. Mrs. Fitzherbert knew, none better, the hatred with which the King regarded his consort, but knowing also all the circumstances of the case, she could at first hardly believe that he would be so foolish as to take a step which would inevitably bring down upon his head an avalanche of abuse and recrimination, and force open the door for an investigation into his own past life. With that past life, for good or for evil, Mrs. Fitzherbert was identified, and though she had all to gain and nothing to lose by the true facts of her connection with the King becoming known, she was too magnanimous to desire a vindication at the expense of the King's dishonour and mortification.

[1] "Memoirs, Journals, and Correspondence of Thomas Moore." Edited by Lord John Russell, 1853.

[2] Comtesse de Flahaut, *née* Margaret Mercer Elphinstone, afterwards Baroness Keith and Nairn, was a great heiress; died 1867.

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Like many another, Mrs. Fitzherbert hoped that a compromise would be arrived at between the King and Queen. All doubts on the subject were, however, dispelled by the return of the Queen, the uproar and confusion that followed, and the introduction of the "Bill of Pains and Penalties." This turn of events determined Mrs. Fitzherbert to stay in Paris. She remembered the abuse showered on her innocent head at the time of "the delicate investigation," and though now she was wholly separated from the King, she deemed it wiser to stay away until the trial should be over. There was another and graver reason. Queen Caroline's friends were not slow to carry the war into the enemy's quarter, and they threatened, in the event of the proceedings turning against the Queen, to rake up the whole of the King's past life, not his *amours* merely (he would have cared very little about them), but to revive the question of his secret marriage to Mrs. Fitzherbert. Queen Caroline was credited with saying, with characteristic coarseness, when she learned the charges against her, "Well, I have only committed adultery with one man, and he was Mrs. Fitzherbert's husband." Whether she really said this or not, the *mot* was repeated far and wide, and it was whispered that the secret marriage was to be one of the planks in the Queen's defence. If the question were raised, witnesses would have to be subpœnaed, documents impounded, the whole miserable business of thirty-five years ago raked up again, and Mrs. Fitzherbert pictured herself, at the age of sixty-four, dragged before the tribunal of the House of Lords and threatened with the mysterious penalties of *præmunire*. It is no wonder that she elected to stay on the other side of the Channel, with certain documents that she always carried about with her safe in her possession, until the danger was passed. In speaking of this possibility years after, she said that "such an ordeal would have broken her heart." Fortunately she was not called upon to face it, for matters were not pushed to such a crisis.

On August 17, 1820, the trial of Queen Caroline began before the House of Lords. The Queen attended in person, and was present on every day of the trial; her progress to and from the House of Lords being the occasion of popular demonstrations. There is no need to recall here the dramatic incidents of the great trial — the Queen's intrepid bearing, the wild en-

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thusiasm of the populace, the miserable character of the witnesses, the base and partial nature of their evidence, and the eloquence of her counsel. Neither need we raise the vexed question of her guilt or innocence. Innocent or guilty, she was a cruelly ill-used woman, and the man who dragged her to the judgment-seat should have been the last person in the world to accuse her, since much that she had done wrong, was in consequence of his ill-treatment. By September 7 the case for the Crown had concluded, and the House adjourned until October 3, to give time for the Queen's defence to be prepared. Thus there was another month of suspense and inaction.

On October 3, the House of Lords met again. The Queen was in her place as before, pale and worn, but undaunted. Never was client better served by counsel. But the figure of the solitary woman sitting there, friendless, her daughter dead, her parents dead, her brother powerless to help, herself aged and weary, spoke eloquently on her behalf. As Denman, one of the Queen's counsel, finely said, *à propos* of the omission of her name from the Liturgy, that the omission was an insult, but before the throne of God it would make no difference, "since she was already prayed for under the heading of 'all who are desolate and oppressed.'"

In Brougham's great speech for the defence, he made a pointed allusion to the King's marriage to Mrs. Fitzherbert. He said he hoped that he could establish the Queen's innocence without having recourse to recrimination, or uttering "one whisper, whether by way of attack, or by way of insinuation, against the conduct of her illustrious husband;" therefore, for the present, he should waive the right that he possessed, and abstain from the use of materials which were his; but he threatened that if he were disappointed in his expectation that the case against the Queen would break down of itself, he would not shrink from the fearless discharge of his sacred duty to protect his client "at all hazards, and against all others," and in the discharge of that duty he, as her advocate, would not "regard the alarm, the suffering, the torment, the destruction, which he might bring upon any others. Nay, separating even the duties of a patriot from those of an advocate, and casting them, if need be, to the wind, he must go on reckless of the consequences, if his fate it should unhappily be *to involve his country*

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QUEEN CAROLINE, CONSORT OF GEORGE IV.

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in confusion." By this allusion, Brougham threatened, if the Queen were not acquitted, to raise the whole question of the King's previous marriage to Mrs. Fitzherbert. In his "Memoirs," Brougham has made this clear. He writes: —

"Independent of our support from the people, and even upon the supposition of the case appearing against us, I had a sure resource — a course that could not have failed, even if the Bill had actually passed the Lords. The threat which I held out in opening the defence was supposed to mean recrimination; and no doubt it included that. We had abundant evidence of the most unexceptionable kind, which would have proved a strong case against the King — indeed, an unquestionable one of that description; but we never could be certain of this proving decisive with both Houses, and it assuredly never would have been sufficient to make the King give up the Bill. . . . When I said that it might be my painful duty to bring forward what would involve the country in confusion, I was astonished that anybody should have conceived recrimination to be *all* I intended. . . . It was of the last importance that the real ground of the defence should be brought forward by surprise, or at all events that it should be presented at once in its full proportions, and by a short and clear statement. The ground, then, was neither more nor less than impeaching the King's own title, by proving that he had forfeited the crown. He had married a Roman Catholic (Mrs. Fitzherbert) while heir-apparent, and this is declared by the Act of Settlement to be a forfeiture of the Crown '*as though he were naturally dead.*' We were not in possession of all the circumstances as I have since ascertained them, but we had enough to prove the fact. Mrs. Fitzherbert's uncle, Mr. Errington, who was present at the marriage — indeed it was performed in his house [1] — was still alive, and though, no doubt, he would have had the right to refuse answering a question to which an affirmative reply exposed him to the pains and penalties of *premunire*, denounced against any person present at such marriage, it was almost certain that, on Mrs. Fitzherbert's behalf, he would have waived the protection, and given his testimony to prove the marriage: but even his refusal would have left the conviction in all men's minds that the

[1] Not correct. The marriage was performed at Mrs. Fitzherbert's own house in Park Street.

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marriage had taken place. However, there existed ample evidence, which Errington would undoubtedly have enabled us to produce, without the possibility of incurring any penalties whatever." [1]

But there was no occasion to proceed to such extreme measures. The torrent of Brougham's eloquence and logic in his opening speech was all-convincing. It soon became evident that it would not be necessary for him to launch his thunderbolt by raising the question of the King's secret marriage to a Roman Catholic. There was no need of recrimination against the King; there was no need even to call witnesses in the Queen's defence. The case against her broke down, and on the third reading of the Bill the majority in the House of Lords had sunk to nine. The Prime Minister, Lord Liverpool, seeing the utter hopelessness of carrying the Bill through the House of Commons, and anxious to end the dangerous agitation without doors, stood up in his place in the House of Lords and announced, on behalf of the Government, the withdrawal of the Bill against the Queen. Such was the "acquittal of Queen Caroline." The Queen was present to hear the result; though shuddering with anxiety, she was courageous to the last. She wrote "Caroline Regina" across a document with a firm hand, and then, victorious and triumphant, went forth to meet her friends, the people, who had gathered, a countless host, outside the walls of Parliament. They received her with frenzied acclamations and generous exultation.

Thus passed the only chance of the truth of Mrs. Fitzherbert's marriage becoming known to the world in her day and generation. But her anxiety was so great that she did not realise this aspect of the case at the time. In her shelter in Paris she heard the result of the Queen's trial with great relief, and in the autumn of 1820, popular excitement having to some extent subsided, she returned to England.

We find her at Brighton as usual for Christmas and the New Year. At Brighton she emerged somewhat from her seclusion, for we read of her giving "a brilliant party, at which amateur theatricals were performed, Lord Normanby and Miss

[1] "Lord Brougham's Memoirs," vol. ii. pp. 405–8. Further quotations from the "Memoirs," touching the legal aspects of the case, have been given in a previous chapter on the validity of the marriage.

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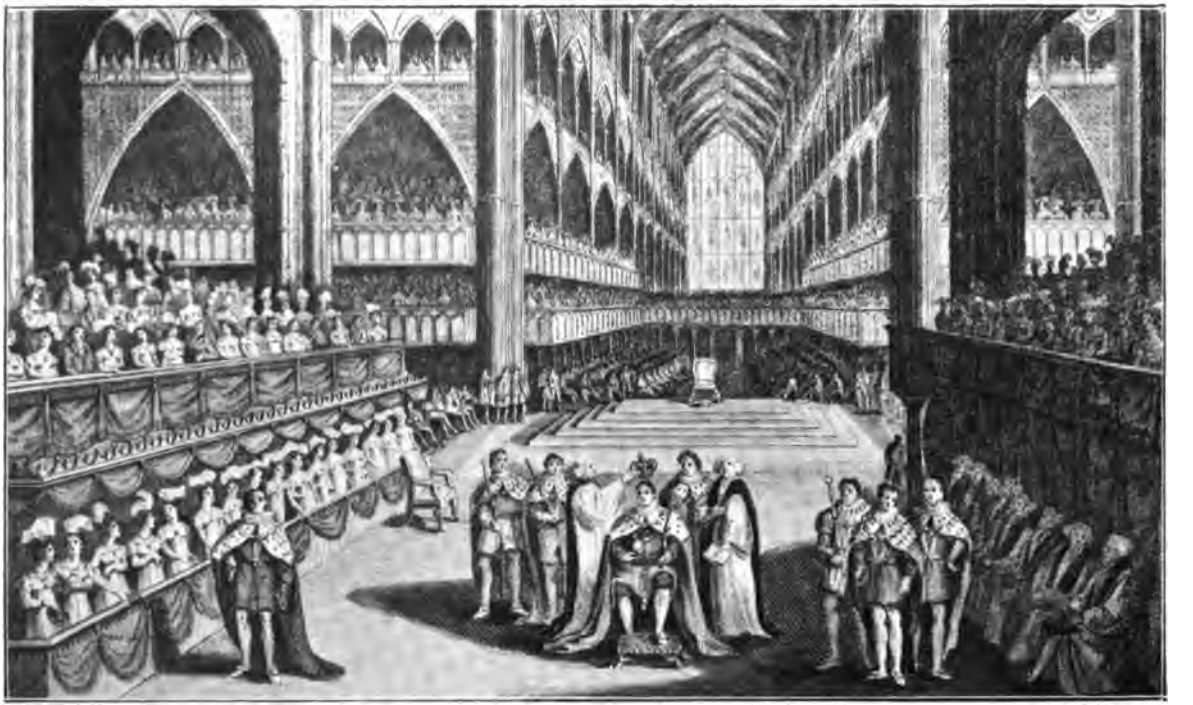

THE CORONATION OF GEORGE IV.

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Seymour acting the leading parts." [1] George IV. also came to Brighton at the end of February for a month, but between Steine House and the Pavilion there was no communication. The King was ill with gout and disappointment at the result of the trial. He saw few people, and entertained not at all. He was worried by endless petitions about his Queen, and, though he feigned indifference, he was almost driven crazy by the annoyance.

The King presently forgot his vexations in a new interest. He had resolved to be crowned, and he was determined, all untoward circumstances notwithstanding, that no coronation before or since should be so magnificent as his. The preparations for it engrossed all his energies through the spring and early summer of 1821. When Queen Caroline heard of it she insisted on being crowned likewise; the demand was refused, on the ground that the King's Consort was only crowned according to the King's pleasure. The coronation of George IV. took place at Westminster Abbey, with great state and splendour. There was only one circumstance which dimmed its lustre; the Queen, the refusal notwithstanding, was determined to be present at the ceremony. On the morning of the coronation she presented herself at the doors of the Abbey and endeavoured to force an entrance. She was refused admittance, and her nerve failing her at the last moment, she gave up the attempt and made her way back to Brandenburg House amid the jeers of the fickle mob. This mortification, added to the excitement she had already undergone, brought about an illness which proved fatal. She died at her house in South Audley Street on August 7, 1821, meeting her death with fortitude and blessing her enemies. Thus ended her troubled life, but even her funeral procession was attended with riots during its passage through London. Her remains were conveyed to Brunswick, and buried there in the vault of her ancestors.

The King had embarked at Holyhead, bound for a visit to Ireland, when the news of the Queen's death reached him. He submitted to a few days' decent retirement, and then continued his voyage. The day he landed in Ireland, he declared to be "the happiest day of his life" — it was the day the ill-fated Caroline was buried at Brunswick.

[1] *Brighton Herald*, February 10, 1821.

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Mrs. Fitzherbert spent the summer of 1821 at her villa at Battersea. She was not present at the coronation. On this occasion also the "two wives were left at home," though one of them had refused to stay there.

When the King returned from Ireland after the death of the unhappy Caroline, he told Mrs. Fitzherbert that he intended to marry again. Her answer was "Very well, Sir," and in this curt reply may be read the measure of her contempt. Lord Stourton, who is responsible for this statement, adds: "She ordered horses with a resolution to abandon the country, and was only prevented from doing so that day by the interposition of a common friend." The "common friend" was probably the Duke of York, and the King must have sent her the message through him, for there is no record that he ever exchanged a word with her after their separation in 1812. Very likely it was on this occasion that Mrs. Fitzherbert showed the Duke of York her marriage certificate, and made him realise for the first time how deeply the King's honour was pledged to her. The Duke, who was a true gentleman, respected her confidence, and forbore to take advantage of it. He must have known what the King's marriage to a Roman Catholic meant to him, and his interests as heir-presumptive to the throne were against the King's marrying again. But perhaps he did not take either the past or the future marriage very seriously.

At the end of September the King set out on a visit to Hanover, and it was rumoured that while there he meant to seek a wife among the numerous Protestant princesses of Germany. But he returned to England without one. There was now an influence at home (far more potent than Mrs. Fitzherbert's or the Duke of York's) at work to prevent the King marrying again.

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CHAPTER XXVI

THE LADY STEWARD

(1821–1825)

THOUGH the King had not succeeded in divorcing his Queen, he had been more successful in getting rid of Lady Hertford. Their separation took place about the time George IV. ascended the throne. Lady Hertford had long wearied him, and no doubt he had long wearied her; she was too reserved, too dignified, too cold for his taste. The wonder is that her influence over him had lasted so long, for he was not a man who affected intellectual friendships with women. Moreover, she was growing old, and the King, who in his youth had always admired women older than himself, now in his later years preferred them younger. For some time past he had been attracted by the charms of the Marchioness Conyngham,[1] who was in the full maturity of her beauty. Lady Conyngham was fair and plump, with a complexion of lilies and roses, blue eyes and golden hair; in short, she was very much like what Mrs. Fitzherbert had been at her zenith. She was far removed from the reproach of being intellectual, and unlike Lady Hertford, her enthusiasms were for individuals and not for causes. She had a sweet smile and the gift of lively, animated conversation; she flattered the King and amused him — in short, she kept him in a good humour, and as he had enough worry and annoyance elsewhere, it would be hard to grudge him the pleasure he found in her society. George IV. created for her the post of "Lady Steward," which made her the mistress of his household. Lord Conyngham became Lord Chamberlain. Many wondered why Lady Conygnham accepted such a position — why she was allowed to accept it. She had a husband, a man of high rank and wealth; she had a grown-up daughter,

[1] Elizabeth, daughter of Joseph Denison, Esq., and wife of third Baron and first Marquess Conyngham.

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"just out," a beautiful creature like her mother; she had a son, a handsome, high-spirited young man; she had, in short, almost everything a woman could wish — why should she imperil an assured position by becoming a King's favourite? If her eyes were blinded by vanity, Lord Conyngham's were not likely to be, for he was a man of sense and honour. We therefore take it that, as a contemporary writer says, "her husband was perfectly satisfied of the harmlessness of the intimacy"; and since he was satisfied, it was obviously not the business of any one else to cavil. Still, there are always people who put evil constructions on the most harmless friendships. Lady Conyngham's brother, Mr. Denison, was one of them; he remonstrated with his sister for accepting the appointment, and threatened to alter his will. Lady Conyngham, in tears of rage and defiance, protested her innocence, and justified everything she did by the precedent of Lady Hertford, whom she declared to be a model of decorum. Lady Hertford was not so charitable; when some one asked her if the King had ever mentioned Lady Conyngham to her, she haughtily replied that, "intimately as she had known the King, and openly as he had always talked to her upon every subject, he had never ventured to speak to her on that of his *mistresses*." [1] There was nothing to prove that Lady Conyngham deserved such a title, but this uncharitableness was perhaps due to something more than jealousy of a triumphant rival. At the time of Queen Caroline's trial, the mob, always behind-hand in these matters, smashed Lady Hertford's windows, while Lady Conyngham's were left untouched. By-and-by, when the people became aware of Lady Conyngham's existence, they applied to her the same epithet as Lady Hertford had done, and most of the writers of contemporary memoirs have endorsed it. But it is quite probable that they were wrong. The King lived alone; he was growing old, his health was failing. His home was not a bright one — for this he had himself to thank. His favourite sister, the Duchess of Gloucester, had her own interests and duties; and his unmarried sister, the Princess Augusta, suffered from ill-health; otherwise, she would have been the most fitting person to preside over his court. The King liked female society; he liked

[1] "Greville Memoirs."

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to have a lady who would sit at his dinner-table and reign over his household. Mrs. Fitzherbert had filled the position for many years by right; Lady Hertford had occupied it at the King's pleasure; and now it was filled by Lady Conyngham with the consent of her husband, who was Lord Chamberlain. Lady Conyngham was very decorative, no wonder the King liked to see her near him at dinner; she was very bright and amusing, no wonder he enjoyed her society; and for the rest — *honi soit qui mal y pense.*

The King was free to create a "Lady Steward" if he wished to do so; in that there was no reason for scandal. Nevertheless, he was unfortunate in his choice. Despite her rank, her beauty and vivacity, Lady Conyngham was a woman with a vulgar mind; she was self-seeking, and took a low view of human nature generally. It soon became apparent that her influence over the King was far worse than Lady Hertford's had ever been. She flattered him to the top of his bent, she affected to believe his preposterous delusions, she encouraged him in his prejudices, and his self-indulgent habits. Knowing how fickle he was, and fearful lest any alien influence should endanger her sway, she encouraged his growing tendency to seclusion until he became almost a hermit, rarely showing himself in public, scarcely going outside the grounds, and sometimes for days not quitting his palace. This was partly due to his vanity, for he had grown very corpulent, and he was intensely sensitive to ridicule. The King now took no walking exercise, and his indolence became a confirmed habit. If ambition had been Lady Hertford's ruling passion, avarice was Lady Conyngham's; she coveted everything she saw, and the infatuated King gave her everything she asked for, even to Crown jewels. She appeared at Devonshire House with a sapphire on her head which had belonged to the Stuarts, a royal heirloom. The heir-presumptive to the throne, the Duke of York, was very indignant, but he did not dare remonstrate with his brother. Nor did the Lady Steward, or "The Lady," as she was generally called, confine her activities to the royal household, which she filled with her creatures; she interfered in every department of the State; she even nominated to bishoprics, of course through the King, and she plotted with the Duke of Cumberland against the King's Ministers. Such a woman was not likely to let

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power slip from her grasp. She bound the King with silken cords, so soft that he did not suspect their strength. She soon disabused the King of his idea of marrying again. Ill, and growing daily more indolent, George IV. was unable to resist her; the matter dropped, and Lady Conyngham took care that it should never be revived.

At the time of Lady Hertford's downfall, and again after Queen Caroline's death, there were rumours that the King and Mrs. Fitzherbert were going to be reconciled. These rumours were, of course, without foundation. Mrs. Fitzherbert made no attempt to meet the King at any point. She was sixty-five, and she declared that her only wish was to end her days in peace and quietness; these, she knew from experience, could not be found in royal palaces. Deep down in her heart her love for the King still lingered, but his name never willingly crossed her lips. She had been so outraged, and so humiliated, that, whatever might have been her secret desire, her pride forbade that any overtures for reconciliation should come from her. If such a thought crossed the King's mind, and it may have done so, for when he spoke of her it was always with respect, he took no steps. Happy would it have been for him if his declining years had been comforted by the care and affection of the woman whom nearly forty years ago he had made his wife, and who had always put his interests before her own. Lady Conyngham, who was incapable of appreciating Mrs. Fitzherbert's reticence, persuaded herself that she was manœuvring to return to the King. She jealously guarded every avenue of approach to him, and did her best by hints and innuendoes to harm Mrs. Fitzherbert. She even strove to prejudice the King against Miss Seymour, for she feared she might be a means of communication between him and Mrs. Fitzherbert. In this respect she completely failed. But she seems to have prevented the King from seeing her; for after the Lady Steward's appointment, Miss Seymour never went to the entertainments at the Pavilion. This, however, may have been due to the fact that she was much abroad, sometimes with Mrs. Fitzherbert, but oftener with members of the Seymour family. We quote a letter written at this time:—

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Mrs. Fitzherbert to Miss Seymour at Brussels.

"SHERWOOD LODGE, *July* 29, 1822.

"Your letter, my dearest Minney, gave me the greatest pleasure imaginable, for what I suffered all Wednesday it is impossible to describe. The wind was so high and the river so agitated that I did nothing but run from the house to watch the tide all day, and I worked myself up to a state of anxiety scarcely to be borne. . . . Several people called on me that morning, among the rest, the Duke of York. He took your letter and gave it to the King, and stayed with him whilst he read it. The King was extremely delighted and pleased with it, and said to the Duke, 'This is a very kind letter indeed.' He asked him questions — how long you were to remain abroad and if, as he had been informed, I was going to join you, and pass the winter in Paris? To all of this the Duke replied that he knew nothing. I am very glad you wrote; I think it will make the Marchioness very angry, and I trust it will convince the King that the stories told him respecting you were only her own fabrications. . . ." [1]

In the autumn Mrs. Fitzherbert joined Miss Seymour in Paris, where they remained the winter, instead of going to Brighton as usual. This was probably to avoid the King and Lady Conyngham, who had come to the Pavilion in October, and prolonged their stay until the following April. Lady Conyngham was far from popular at Brighton, for Mrs. Fitzherbert's absence was put down to her, and on more than one occasion, when she drove out, she was greeted with unmistakable signs of public disapproval. The King saw and heard nothing of this, for he rarely went outside the Pavilion grounds.

Mrs. Fitzherbert was back in London for the season of 1823, and went out a great deal with Miss Seymour. The summer was spent as usual at Sherwood Lodge, and in December Mrs. Fitzherbert returned to Brighton, where she was

[1] The above letter, and the others which follow in this volume, written by Mrs. Fitzherbert to Miss Seymour, afterwards Mrs. Dawson Damer, were lent to me for the purpose of this book. I have selected them from a mass of similar correspondence. Mrs. Fitzherbert was not a very good letter-writer, and the secret of her charm must be looked for elsewhere. As she once wrote to Mrs. Damer, "My pen and I are always at war."

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warmly welcomed. "The poor of Brighton, to whom Mrs. Fitzherbert is endeared by her benevolences, will have reason to rejoice at her return, and we hope she may make a protracted stay with us," [1] writes a local paper, and another declared: "In her the poor ever find a pitying and relieving friend." [2]

Mrs. Fitzherbert to Miss Seymour at Hampton Court Palace.

"BRIGHTON,
"*Sunday, December* 14, 1823.

"Your letter this morning, my dearest Minney, gave me much pleasure, for I am so unused to be at Brighton without you, that the sight of it quite revived me, particularly to hear that you are to come to me on Saturday [for Christmas]. Pray do not disappoint me. You will be welcomed here by more than myself, for I have given out that I shall not receive company until your Ladyship makes your appearance. There are several strangers here, who don't know what to do with themselves, and they will be very glad to have a lounging place for dinner and for the evening. But I am determined not to kill the fatted calf until you arrive, and if, as I hope, you will arrive on Saturday, I will have some company to meet you at dinner on Sunday. Therefore pray send me a line to say you will be with me on that day.

"Brighton is so full that there is not a lodging to be had, and a great number of our acquaintances are here, including the Bedfords,[3] who go to-morrow, and Lord Charlemont,[4] who leaves the day after. You will laugh when I tell you that Lord and Lady Holland [5] came to visit me the day after I arrived. There is nothing gay going on, but I have promised to be *very* gay when you come. You will be delighted at the great improvements. The Chain Pier [6] is beautiful, and I have a delightful view of it from my windows.

[1] *Brighton Gazette*, December 18, 1823.
[2] *Brighton Herald*, January 24, 1824.
[3] John, sixth Duke of Bedford, and Georgiana his wife.
[4] James, second Earl of Charlemont.
[5] Henry Richard, third Lord Holland, and Elizabeth, his wife, *née* Vassall. She married first, Sir Godfrey Webster, Bart., who divorced her for adultery with Lord Holland, whom she afterwards married. She was *the* Lady Holland, whose parties at Holland House were famous.
[6] The Chain Pier had recently been opened (November 25, 1823). It was destroyed in a storm, December 4, 1896.

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"Everybody who could gain admission went to the King's Chapel this morning; the panel behind His Majesty took fire, and the congregation were nearly suffocated. Sparks of fire made their appearance in the chapel, but as His Majesty did not move, all the company sat quiet, frightened out of their wits, as none of them dared stir. After about three-quarters of an hour, when the fear of being burned had subsided, the windows were thrown open, and then people nearly died of the cold, but so far every one has escaped unhurt.[1] The Duke of York and the Clarences are expected here on the 24th. The poor Duke has had a bad cold, but he writes me word that he is better. God bless you, my dear Minney; my best love to Mr. and Mrs. George.[2] Let me have a few lines from you, and believe me, always, truly and affectionately yours,

"M. F.-H."

Mrs. Fitzherbert was so delighted with her reception at Brighton that she determined to stay there more in the future. This decision did not commend itself to the Lady Steward, who regarded the proximity of Mrs. Fitzherbert to the Pavilion as a danger. Moreover, she hated the place, and she determined to keep the King from Brighton as much as she could. She succeeded for a time, and Mrs. Fitzherbert was left in possession of the field.

During the London season of 1824, Miss Seymour became engaged to Colonel George Dawson, second son of the Earl of Portarlington. Miss Seymour had received many offers of marriage — some of them highly advantageous — but she was determined to follow the promptings of her heart. Though she dreaded the prospect of parting from her adopted daughter, Mrs. Fitzherbert did everything to further her happiness. The marriage was not to take place for a year, but during the summer Mrs. Fitzherbert was already preparing for the event. First she sold her house at Sherwood Lodge to Lord Darnley for £12,000, thus keeping only her houses in Tilney Street and at Brighton. Next, she had her niece, Mary (daughter of her

[1] The local papers do not appear to have chronicled this incident.

[2] Miss Seymour's eldest brother, Captain George Seymour, R.N. He married, 1811, Georgiana Mary, daughter of Admiral the Hon. G. C. Berkeley. He subsequently became Admiral Sir George Francis Seymour, G.C.B., and died 1870. His eldest son succeeded his cousin as fifth Marquess of Hertford.

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second brother, Mr. John Smythe, who had died a few years before), to stay with her, in the hope that she might in some degree fill the void in her life which would be caused by Miss Seymour's marriage. She was not in very good health during the summer, and we find her at Cheltenham, and also at Tunbridge Wells. But she was back in Brighton by the end of September, "not only for the winter season, but with the intent of making this her chief place of abode in future." [1] She spent Christmas there with Miss Seymour and Miss Smythe, her "two children," as she called them. For their pleasure she gave a dance, which was one of the events of the Brighton season. We read: "On Tuesday night Mrs. Fitzherbert gave a splendid ball, with one of the most sumptuous suppers, that has taken place this season. The company was composed of all the Fashionables at present in Brighton. The rooms were elegantly decorated, and the supper-table was set forth with every kind of ornament — plateaux, vases, flowers, &c. There was also a most superb table of gold plate, and the most valuable china. The carriages began to set down at half-past eight o'clock, and continued to near one o'clock." [2] Mrs. Fitzherbert also gave card parties, dinner parties, evening parties without end, and her lavish hospitality added greatly to her popularity in Brighton. When she left in May for London to make preparations for Miss Seymour's marriage, there was loud lamentation.[3] In Brighton, Mrs. Fitzherbert still was queen, and the local papers reported her comings and goings, and everything she did, as regularly as though they were her court circular.

The marriage of Miss Seymour to Colonel Dawson took place in London on August 3, 1825.[4] The King sent the bride a handsome present, and a letter in which he bade her "be always good to his dear old friend, Mrs. Fitzherbert," a recommendation which she did not need, but which the King needed

[1] *Brighton Gazette*, September 11, 1824.

[2] Ibid., January 28, 1825.

[3] "May 12, 1825. Mrs. Fitzherbert, we regret to learn, leaves her Steine residence this day for Tilney Street. The absence of this lady is really a loss; for we know of no one who, to kindness of disposition, adds so great a share of consideration for the tradesman, and humanity and charity to the poor." — *Brighton Gazette*.

[4] See note 2 on following page.

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very much. Directly after the wedding, Mrs. Fitzherbert went to Buxton. Her health was not good, and how deeply she felt the separation from her adopted daughter the following quotations from letters will show: —

Mrs. Fitzherbert to the Hon. Mrs. Dawson, Hampton Court Palace.

"Buxton, *August* 7, 1825.

"I will not revert to my parting with you, Dearest. The distress that occupied my mind at the idea of a separation from you affected me so much that I could not say half that I wanted to say to you, but ran out of the house as fast as I could, so as not to annoy you by my sufferings. I am glad Hampton Court was made agreeable to you. . . . I hope too, my dear Minney, you have written a proper letter to the King. If you have not already done so, pray do it. It is what he had a right to expect, and when you see Mr. Forster,[1] I am sure he will be of my opinion."

[1] Mr. Forster was the King's solicitor, and one of Mrs. Fitzherbert's trustees.

[2] The Right Hon. Col. George Lionel Dawson Damer, C. B. (1788–1856), 3rd son of George, 1st Earl of Portarlington. = Mary Georgiana Emma, dau. of Lord Hugh Seymour (1798–1848).

(1) Georgiana Augusta Charlotte Caroline, *m.* 3rd Earl Fortescue, *d.* Dec. 8, 1866.

(2) Lady Cecilia Blanche Horatia (raised with her surviving sisters by royal warrant, in March 1889, to the precedence of an Earl's daughter), *m.* 1859 Lieut.-Col. Francis Haygarth, late Scots Fusilier Guards.

(3) Lionel Seymour William, *b.* April 7, 1832, succeeded his cousin, 3rd Earl of Portarlington, Mar. 1, 1889, as 4th Earl of Portarlington, *m.* 1855 Hon. Harriet Lydia Montagu, 2nd dau. of 3rd Lord Rokeby, *d.* 1892.

(4) Lady Evelyn Mary, *m.* 1855 Capt. Francis Sutton, late of R.H. Guards, *d.* Oct. 1899.

(5) Lady Constance Wilhelmina Francis, *m.* 1856 Sir John Leslie, Bart., late of 1st L. Guards.

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"BUXTON, *Sunday, August* 21, 1825.

"It is quite impossible, my dearest dear Minney, to express to you half of what my feelings are at this moment. Your dear letters of Friday and Saturday I have received, and feel much gratified that at the moment you had so much to occupy you, you should think of me; though I cannot help feeling I *do* deserve it, from the very great and tender attachment I have ever felt for you since your birth. No mother, I am certain, ever loved her *own child* more dearly than I have loved you. I pray to God from morning to night that your happiness may be as complete as I wish, and as you deserve. Mr. Dawson will, I trust, do all in his power to render you happy. I would wish very much to see you before you go abroad, but I do not know how to manage it, for I am at such a distance from you. In the state of mind I am in at this moment I should like to set out directly and visit you, but, alas! I am far from well. Still I think we *might* meet half-way from this place, and pass a few hours together, but I do not know exactly what your plans are until I hear from you again. This is an odious place, and I would not have you think of coming here on any pretext whatever.

"I am so nervous that I am unable to write more. You shall hear from me again, when I am more composed; I can only add — May Heaven bless and protect you, my dearest child; it is the constant wish and prayer of your very affectionate

"M. F.-H."

What Colonel Dawson's sentiments were, is shown from the following letter he wrote to Mrs. Fitzherbert a few days later: —

"For myself, my dear Madam, allow me to return you my warm thanks for your kind expressions respecting me. I trust I am fully aware of my good fortune, and of the treasure which Providence has bestowed on me. I pray you to be confident that I am quite conscious of that indissoluble bond of affection which unites you and my wife, and I would wish to prove to you that my most ardent hopes are that I shall not only be able to make *her* happy, but also, if it is in my power, to contribute to *your* comfort by every act of my future life, and thus showing you that I am not quite unworthy of being so blessed."

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THE HON. MRS. DAWSON DAMER

MRS. FITZHERBERT'S ADOPTED DAUGHTER

(*From the Miniature by* ISABEY. *Photo by* Mr. W. B. BOULTOS.
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This promise Colonel Dawson fulfilled to Mrs. Fitzherbert's great comfort and satisfaction, and she became much attached to him. But at first she felt her loss deeply. Then, as always, Mrs. Fitzherbert was fortunate in her friends; many of them, sympathising with her in her loneliness, entreated her to visit them. She accepted some of their invitations, for she could not bear the thought of going back to her empty home.

Mrs. Fitzherbert to the Hon. Mrs. Dawson, Tilney Street.

"BUXTON,
"*Saturday morning, September* 1825.

"MY DEAREST MINNEY, — The Duke of Devonshire [1] came over to visit me here a few days ago, and wanted me to go to Chatsworth immediately, as he was going on the 13th to Doncaster Races. Not being well, besides being engaged to go to Hooton, I excused myself, but he insisted on my going to make him a visit on my return (which will be on the 24th), and I have agreed to do so. . . . I had a letter yesterday from the Duke of York, just as he was setting out for Brighton. I do not think he knew you were in town or he would have called upon you. You have no idea of the talk at this place of his being shut up in an *absolute ale-house* upon the Moors, with the party he visited, and of the *extraordinary* things that occurred, some very laughable and amusing; but as I have a very real and sincere regard and affection for the Duke I feel very sorry and hurt at all the absurdities and ridicule their conduct has occasioned. I hear they are all to meet at Lord Hertford's. . . .

"I feel very jealous of what you write with regard to poor old Forster. I always thought that I was a great favourite, but I fear you have superseded me. He is an excellent person, and I have a very sincere regard for him. I forget what I wrote in the postscript he showed to the King. I know from the Duke of York I am in high favour with his Majesty. I don't know for what!"

Shortly after this Mrs. Fitzherbert left Buxton on a visit to

[1] William Spencer, sixth Duke of Devonshire (1790–1858), unmarried.

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Hooton, near Chester, the seat of Sir Thomas Stanley,[1] who had married Mrs. Fitzherbert's niece Mary, daughter of Sir Carnaby and Lady Haggerston.

Mrs. Fitzherbert to the Hon. Mrs. Dawson, Paris.

"HOOTON, *October* 3, 1825.

"I have stayed at this place longer than I intended; I have been so comfortable that I felt I could not be better off. I have had very kind invitations from the Cholmondeleys,[2] and also from the Seftons,[3] but as I had written to the Duke of Devonshire to fix being at Chatsworth on the 8th, I was under the necessity of sending them my excuses, particularly as I had been obliged to put off going to Chatsworth twice from indisposition. I should like very much to have gone to the Seftons. I went the other day to Lord Grosvenor's,[4] who gave us a fine lunch; the house is the most magnificent thing I ever saw. Lady Elizabeth Belgrave[5] inquired most kindly after you, and desired me to send a thousand loves. She expects every day to be confined, and is most anxious to have a son."[6]

"CHATSWORTH, *October* 17, 1825.

"I cannot tell you, dearest Minney, the delight I felt when the Duke [of Devonshire] gave me a letter from you dated from Nantes; he said it was addressed in your handwriting, and he knew it would make me happy. No one could be kinder than he has been to me; we often talk of you, and he

[1] Sir Thomas Stanley, ninth Baronet, married Mary, only daughter and heiress of Sir Carnaby Haggerston, Bart. Their second son, Roland, who succeeded his brother, Sir William Stanley, tenth Baronet, as eleventh Baronet, assumed by royal licence, in 1820 (pursuant to the will of Henry Errington, Esq., of Sandhoe and Red Rice, Hants), the surname of Errington.

[2] The second Marquess and Marchioness of Cholmondeley, at Cholmondeley Castle, Nantwich.

[3] The second Earl and Countess of Sefton, Croxteth Park, Liverpool. Mrs. Fitzherbert was connected through the Stanleys and the Erringtons with the Seftons.

[4] Robert, second Earl Grosvenor, created 1831 first Marquess of Westminster (1767–1845).

[5] Lady Elizabeth Mary, youngest daughter of the first Duke of Sutherland, married 1819 Viscount Belgrave, afterwards second Marquess of Westminster.

[6] The son was born, October 13, 1825. He was Hugh Lupus, third Marquess and first Duke of Westminster, died 1899.

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has had letters from Lord Granville [1] full of your praises. The Duke seemed very much pleased at your having bought so many French hats, &c.; he is greatly occupied with ladies' dresses; he says you dress remarkably well, and that at one of his parties you desired him to admire a gown you had on; he said it was certainly very pretty, but that it was an old one, he had seen you in it before. He expects everybody to be dressed here as if going to a ball, and looks rather shy if you have not a fresh gown for every day. This is rather a bore to me, for I hate the trouble of dressing up, and in this particular I am afraid I don't stand very high in his estimation.

"I meant to have gone away two days ago, but I caught a violent cold, which has confined me to my bed, but I am so much better that I intend going to-morrow to Mr. Fitzherbert's,[2] and thence to Trentham [3] for a day or two. After that, as the weather is getting cold, I shall make no more visits, but return the end of the month to Tilney Street.

"I am very much pleased you are so delighted with your tour; I am told the road from Genoa to Rome is beautiful. When once you are settled there I shall begin to count the weeks and the days until you will return. Indeed, indeed, my dearest Minney, when I get out of spirits, which I very often do, the only thing I look forward to with any pleasure is the thought of once more embracing you, my dear child, and I constantly pray to God to spare my life that I may be blessed with the sight of you again, and that I may see you settled somewhere or other *in a house of your own*, and as happy and as comfortable as I wish you to be. But I am getting into the dismals, so I shall say no more on the subject.

"Gurwood [4] wrote me a long letter the other day. He came over with despatches . . . and is gone back to take up his residence at Paris. He offers to come over and escort me to Paris whenever I have a wish to go there. The Hollands have

[1] The first Earl Granville (1773–1846), then Viscount Granville, Ambassador at Paris.

[2] Mr. Thomas Fitzherbert, nephew of her second husband, at Swynnerton, Staffordshire.

[3] Trentham Hall, Stoke-on-Trent. The Marquess of Stafford's.

[4] Colonel John Gurwood, C.B. (1790–1845), Deputy Lieutenant of the Tower, private secretary of the Duke of Wellington, and editor of the "Wellington Despatches."

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played the same trick with the Granthams they did with me some years ago at Cheltenham; they having taken possession of the *première* at Meurice's Hotel which was promised to the Granthams, and Lady Holland says nothing shall make her give it up. In consequence of this, the Granthams have returned to the Isle of Wight until they can hear of something to suit them. Really that woman is a plague to everybody!

"I have written a sad scrawl, but the number of people that are running in and out of my room quite distract me. Adieu, my dearest; may every blessing attend you, prays ever your affectionate

"M. F.-H."

"TILNEY STREET, *November* 7, 1825.

"I arrived here the day before yesterday, rather glad to get to my fireside before the very bad weather set in. I have been a sad rambler. After I left Chatsworth, I went to the Fitzherberts' and thence to Trentham, where I met the whole family. Lady Stafford [1] was constantly lamenting you were not her daughter-in-law; there is nothing they wished for so much as to have had you Lady Francis.[2] I ought to be, and indeed am, very much pleased with my tour. It is quite impossible to tell you all the kind attentions and courtesies I have received from everybody."

[1] Elizabeth, Countess of Sutherland (in her own right), married George Granville, second Marquess of Stafford, who was created in 1833 first Duke of Sutherland.

[2] Lord Francis Sutherland-Leveson-Gower, who wished to marry Miss Seymour, was the second son of the first Duke of Sutherland, and was later created first Earl of Ellesmere.

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CHAPTER XXVII

IN THE GREY OF LIFE

(1825–1829)

THE next few years of Mrs. Fitzherbert's life, the years that followed the marriage of her adopted daughter, were uneventful. With the King she had no communication whatever, either directly or indirectly, and she lived wholly apart from the world of politics. She had now reached the age of threescore and ten years, and though her days yet were by no means all "labour and sorrow," she had her share of suffering and grief. Her strength was slowly failing, and one by one her friends were passing away. Despite the fact that her niece, Miss Smythe, to whom she was much attached, was living with her, she felt very much alone.

To add to her worries the controversy on *The Subject*, as she called it (her marriage with the Prince of Wales, now George IV.), was revived by the publication of Moore's "Life of Sheridan," and Sir William Knighton, the King's private secretary, was going about everywhere denying that the marriage had ever taken place, and whispering calumnies against Mrs. Fitzherbert. John Wilson Croker was also called into conference, probably to deal with the matter in the press. Croker, who was a creature of Lord Hertford's, was strongly prejudiced against Mrs. Fitzherbert, and did everything in his power to harm her positon. The King was very intimate with him at this time. He called him "Croko," and had long and intimate conversations with him on divers subjects. On one of these occasions (if we may believe Croker, for there is no other evidence) the King entered on the subject of his "supposed marriage with Mrs. Fitzherbert," and declared that there was no truth in "that absurd story of my supposed marriage." [1]

[1] Croker, *op. cit.*

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We cannot accept this statement of Croker's without hesitation; but if the King did say so, it may be classed with the other hallucinations which beset him at this time. His power of self-deception was so great that he talked himself into believing that he was at the battle of Waterloo, and even appealed to the Duke of Wellington to verify the statement. "I have heard your Majesty say so before," replied the Duke drily. If, therefore, George IV. persuaded himself that he had been present at Waterloo, it is quite possible that he also persuaded himself that he had not been present at his own marriage with Mrs. Fitzherbert. And we may be sure that Croker did not seek to disillusion him, but adroitly fell in with the mood of his royal master. Be this as it may, it is certain the press at this time teemed with references to Mrs. Fitzherbert and her "supposed marriage," and many scandalous hints and innuendoes which annoyed her greatly. She had all the documents necessary to prove her marriage in her possession, and with a word she could have silenced her calumniators. But that word was not spoken, and in none of her letters does she make the slightest allusion to these annoyances. But she felt the cruelty of it deeply, and nearly all her letters at this time are tinged with melancholy.

Mrs. Fitzherbert to the Hon. Mrs. Dawson.

"TILNEY STREET, *November* 15, 1825.

"How very kind of you, Dearest, to think of me, and of all my sufferings at Nice. Your search after the tomb [1] must have been fruitless; it is in one of the chapels I purchased, in a church, and I conclude there could have been no one at Nice who could recollect me at such a distance of time since the event took place. But your thinking of it pleased and gratified me. . . . The Duke of York stayed with me all yesterday evening in high good humour. He has come to stay a month in town, and then I suppose he will go his round of visits, to Belvoir, &c."

[1] The tomb of Mr. Fitzherbert, Mrs. Fitzherbert's second husband, who died at Nice.

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"TILNEY STREET, *November* 30, 1825.

"The Duchess of Rutland died on Thursday.[1] It is said she was not ailing for more than two days. Henry Halford was sent for express to Belvoir, but arrived too late. My poor friend, the Duke [of York] is very much shocked and grieved. I have seen a great deal of him since I came to town. He came to call on me the day after the event had taken place, and was very much affected by it. He has such a kind heart, and they were such *dear friends*, that I like him better for the feeling he shows on this occasion."

Mrs. Fitzherbert remained in London throughout the winter of 1825–26. She was ill with rheumatism and asthma, and for two or three months was confined to her house in Tilney Street. At one time considerable anxiety was felt for her, on account of her age, but her fine constitution stood her in good stead, and when the summer came she rallied. In the autumn she went to Bath. She writes from there to Mrs. Dawson: —

"BATH, *October* 30, 1826.

"I have nothing to tell you, Dearest, for we are as dull and stupid as possible. There is scarcely a creature I know here except some old *Fograms*, whose company I would rather be without. People have made such melancholy histories about the poor Duke [of York] that I began to be quite unhappy, but I was fortunate enough to get a letter from him on Friday, written in very good spirits, and telling me he was much better, and that his medical adviser assured him he was so, and that he felt stronger, and seemed comfortable in every respect. This makes me quite easy. I trust in God he may continue so."

During the autumn the Duke of York grew worse, and was reported to be in great danger. Mrs. Fitzherbert was worried and anxious about him, as the following letter, which she wrote to his physician,[2] shows: —

[1] Elizabeth, Duchess of Rutland, daughter of fifth Earl of Carlisle, married the fifth Duke of Rutland; died November 29, 1825.

[2] Sir Henry Halford, Bart. (1766–1844), confidential physician to the King and other members of the royal family.

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Mrs. Fitzherbert to Sir Henry Halford, Bart., M.D.

"Your letter, my dear Sir Henry, has grieved me to the heart; the account of the poor Duke is sad, very sad. I have long thought his case deplorable, but now I begin to quite despair, and to feel that there is no chance of his recovery. Alas! what a loss the country, his family, and his friends will sustain. I am sure none will feel or lament it more than I shall.

"The account of his having gone through the operation was publicly talked of here the day after it took place. I mention this for fear you should suppose I had communicated the contents of your letter, not one syllable of which ever passed my lips. I begin to think there is no such thing as a secret in the world.

"What shall I say, or how can I express my thanks — my gratitude to you for the trouble you have been so kind, so generous as to take with regard to my papers? You have no idea of the weight of anxiety and uneasiness you have removed from my mind. For I don't think I should have had a moment's peace or tranquillity had those papers fallen into the hands of those who on a former occasion made such mischief, and so many disagreeable scenes and confusion. I really do not know what I should have done; it would have made me miserable.

"You are very kind in inquiring after me. The waters certainly have done me a great deal of good, but I am sadly tormented with headaches, partly rheumatism. My head at this moment is so confused that I scarcely know what I am about. If you should have a moment to spare, and will give me a line to tell me how the Duke goes on, you will do me a great favour, for I cannot tell you the anxiety I feel about him. God bless you, my dear and kind friend, for as such I must ever esteem you; and with every good wish to you, believe me always, your very sincere and truly grateful

"M. F.-H."[1]

It will be seen from the above that Mrs. Fitzherbert's anxiety was not only on account of the Duke of York, but also concern-

[1] This letter is published in the "Life of Sir Henry Halford," by William Munk, M.D. London, 1895.

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ing the letters which she had written him. They had been in constant correspondence for over thirty years, writing quite freely to one another, both on private affairs and public events. Mrs. Fitzherbert kept all the Duke's letters, all the King's letters, and all the documents relating to her marriage in a box, and carried them about with her wherever she went, keeping them always in her bedroom. On one occasion, shortly after the accession of George IV., these papers nearly fell into the possession of Sir William Knighton, the King's private secretary, who was at that time in league with Lady Conyngham. Knighton determined to get hold of them by fair means or foul. One day when the court was at Brighton, he called at Mrs. Fitzherbert's house on the pretext of inquiring after her health. She was ill in bed, and sent word she was unable to receive him. Nothing daunted, he forced his way into her bedroom, to the great alarm and agitation of the poor old lady, who knew what he was in search of. However, his quest was not successful.[1] Shortly after this "domiciliary visit"[2] Mrs. Fitzherbert took care to remove her papers to a place of safety. Knighton's audacious attempt led her to think that her correspondence with the Duke of York at least should be destroyed. She sent all the Duke's letters back to him, with the exception of a few brief notes of no importance (such as those quoted in this book), and the Duke returned her letters to her. Lord Stourton gives the following account of the fate of this correspondence:—

"Previously to the death of the Duke of York, they agreed on both sides that all their correspondence should be destroyed; and she assured me that when Sir Herbert Taylor[3] gave her up her own correspondence, she was for two years employed in the perusal and burning of these most interesting letters. When Sir Herbert Taylor surrendered them to her in person, she told him that she had been almost afraid that they[4] would have got these papers from him. He replied 'not all the kings upon earth should have obtained them.' She added, that had she entertained mercenary views, she believed she might have ob-

[1] Sir William Knighton, Bart. (1776–1836), private secretary to George IV. (originally a surgeon).

[2] *Vide* Greville's "Memoirs."

[3] General Sir Herbert Taylor, G.C.B. (1775–1839), private secretary to the Duke of York.

[4] George IV. and Sir William Knighton.

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tained any price she had chosen to ask for the correspondence, which it was in her power to have laid before the public; that she could have given the best private and public history of all the transactions of the country, from the close of the American War down to the death of the Duke of York, either from her communications with the Duke, or from her own connections with the opposite party, through the Prince and friends." [1]

The Duke of York died on January 5, 1827, in the sixty-fourth year of his age.[2] His death left his next brother, the Duke of Clarence, heir-presumptive to the throne. The Duke of York had long struggled against a painful illness, and during the last months of his life his sufferings were agonising, but he bore them with fortitude, and continued until nearly the end to discharge his duties as Commander-in-Chief. The Duke took little part in politics, but during the last year or two of his life, he had come forward as "the Royal Protestant champion," and the strenuous opponent of Catholic Emancipation. The Duke had his failings, but he had also sterling good qualities. In public life he was sincerely devoted to his country; in private life he was a true friend. He was the most popular of all the royal brothers. Greville, who was not given to flattering princes, wrote of him, "He is the only one of the Princes who has the feelings of an English gentleman. His amiable disposition and excellent temper have conciliated for him the esteem and regard of men of all parties, and he has endeared himself to his friends by the warmth and steadiness of his attachments, and through the implicit confidence they have in his truth, straightforwardness, and sincerity." [3]

No one could testify to the sincerity of his friendship more than Mrs. Fitzherbert. In the death of the Duke of York she had lost her best friend, and one who stood on the very steps of the throne, her advocate and mediator with the King. Friendly as were her relations with all the royal brothers (except the Duke of Cumberland), the Duke of York was the first of all. Nothing shook their friendship, not family ties, not the dislike of the Duchess, nor the opposition of the Duke to Roman Catholic Emancipation. There is little doubt that, had the

[1] Langdale's "Memoirs," pp. 142–43.
[2] The Duchess of York had predeceased him in 1820.
[3] "Greville Memoirs."

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Duke of York lived to succeed George IV., Mrs. Fitzherbert's character would have been vindicated in the eyes of the world, by the public acknowledgment of the *fact* of her marriage. She would have been content to leave her cause in his hands.

Mrs. Fitzherbert spent Christmas in Bath, and she did not return to Brighton until the middle of January 1827. She remained there until May,[1] but in consequence of the Duke of York's death she gave no entertainments, and had no visitors except Mrs. Dawson. The King was also at Brighton. He arrived there a fortnight after the Duke's death, and at first saw no one, though after a few weeks the music was resumed. He was very ill with gout, but the only answer given to callers was, "The King is well." It was a melancholy winter.

On March 7, 1827, George IV. left Brighton for the last time, and his Pavilion, the scene of so many early associations and pleasant memories, saw him no more. It was his intention to return, but Lady Conyngham prevented him. During the visit some one had written with a diamond on a window at the Pavilion some lines reflecting severely on the Lady Steward. This, combined with the fact that she was hooted in the streets, made her vow that she would never go to Brighton again, or suffer the King to return. She kept her word. The following letter of Mrs. Fitzherbert was written at this time: —

Mrs. Fitzherbert to the Hon. Mrs. George Dawson.

"BRIGHTON, *March* 5, 1827.

"You will be surprised to hear that his Majesty has given orders for his departure on Wednesday or Thursday next. This I understood has surprised the Household very much, and report says there is some misunderstanding, but I believe they are all going on as usual. Madam Lieven[2] goes either to-day or to-morrow; she was walking the other day with Lady Mary

[1] "Mrs. Fitzherbert, accompanied by Miss Smythe, visited our Fair on Ireland's Cricketing Ground on Monday last and made several purchases. Mrs. Fitzherbert enjoys the best of health, and her countenance still retains all its sweetness, and no inconsiderable portion of its former beauty." — *Brighton Gazette*, May 10, 1827.

[2] The Princess Lieven, Russian Ambassadress, who was a great friend of the Duke of Cumberland.

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Hill,[1] who mentioned something about Mrs. Fitzherbert. Madam Lieven said she had no acquaintance with her. What do you think of that? It is really very entertaining, her way of going on!"

"BRIGHTON, *March* 15, 1827.

"I have just received a letter from Rush, the poor Duke of York's steward, to offer me to purchase some lamps I gave the Duke some years ago. It would make me quite unhappy to have them back again, and would bring all sorts of uncomfortable facts to my recollection. I would therefore beg George to be good enough to see Rush, to thank him from me for his attention, but to say that I must decline taking them, particularly as I have written to a friend to purchase me something the Duke was in the habit of using. It would be more precious to me than anything else."

At this time, in consequence of a difference between the King and Lady Conyngham, there was a revival of the rumours (which were periodical) that a reconciliation was likely to be effected between the King and Mrs. Fitzherbert. These rumours seem to have reached the ears of Mrs. Dawson, who must have rallied the old lady on the subject, for in her next letter she writes: "What can you and Louisa[2] mean by your jokes and insinuations about the Pavilion? I think you have both lost your senses upon that subject. It is, I assure you, quite news to me, nor can I account for what has given rise to such foolish reports."[3]

To the Hon. Mrs. Dawson Damer,[4] *Paris.*

"TILNEY STREET, *Sunday, October* 10, 1827.

"The Duke of Sussex was with me yesterday. He is going a long tour of visits. The King, the day he went to the Queen of Wurtemburg's birthday[5] at St. James's, announced to his

[1] Mary, youngest daughter of the second Marquess of Downshire, died unmarried 1830.

[2] Miss Louisa Smythe, daughter of Mrs. Fitzherbert's eldest brother, Mr. Walter Smythe.

[3] Brighton, March 18, 1827.

[4] Colonel Dawson had now added the name of Damer to his own, in accordance with the will of his aunt, Lady Caroline Damer, who died in 1826.

[5] Charlotte Augusta Matilda, Princess Royal of Great Britain, Queen of Wurtemburg, born September 29, 1766. She died in 1828, the following year.

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THE CHAIN PIER, BRIGHTON, *circa* 1825

(*From a Drawing in the possession of* Mr. JOHN HAINES)

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Family that he was going to pull down the entire palace of St. James's, and Marlborough House too; and as Prince Leopold has the latter only for nine years to come, he should pay him £3000 per annum for turning him out — £1000 less than he pays rent for it now! People are all in amazement at these proceedings. It is also said that the King is to reside at Devonshire House this winter, in consequence of the alterations he is making at the Cottage at Windsor. What *will* he do next?"

"TILNEY STREET, *November* —, 1827.

"I imagine, dearest Minney, that you will receive this on the 23rd [Mrs. Damer's birthday]. I wish I were with you to express to you in person all I feel upon the occasion, and how sincerely, and from the bottom of my heart, I wish you, my dear Child, many happy returns of the day, with everything you wish for or desire. You talk of old age — think what I am [seventy-one]. I assure you I should be very sorry to have to pass my youthful days over again. It is a great consolation, at my advanced age, to have those I love the most (yourself and Mary,[1] my two children) both well and happy, and to receive from them kindness and affection, and to end my days in peace and quietness."

"BRIGHTON, *November* 29, 1827.

"Here I am with all England at Brighton; there never were so many people of Fashion here before, and my house has been like a Fair all day yesterday, and to-day. But I shall not be comfortable, my dearest Minney, until I get you and George here. It is the only thing I have to look forward to with pleasure. . . . The day before I left town I was with Princess Sophia[2] for an hour and a half. She spoke very kindly of you. She said she was quite sure Lady C[onyngham] had done what she told them all she intended to do, and that the King said he was very happy at it. Henry Halford assured me that he was now quite well; he had been ill with the gout, and had lost a good deal of his size, by Halford's making him live very abstemiously, but he was the better for it."

[1] Her niece, Mary, daughter of Mr. John Smythe.

[2] Princess Sophia of Gloucester, daughter of the Duke of Gloucester, who married the Dowager-Countess Waldegrave. The Princess Sophia was therefore step-sister to Mrs. Dawson Damer's mother, Lady Horatia Seymour.

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"BRIGHTON, *Monday, December* 3, 1827.

"The appointment of Sumner[1] to the Bishoprick of Winchester makes a great talk, and brings forth abuse from all quarters. From what I hear it will be a very stormy session — everybody is dissatisfied. I hope all your riots in Paris are at an end. The Hollands are still here, and nothing can be more civil and kind than they are to me, sending me game and all sorts of good things. You know how I have dreaded their dining with me. The other day the Duke of Bedford dined with me, and I mentioned to him my fear of inviting *her*. He said she had constantly refused dining with him, but that I was in such favour, that he dared say she would dine with me. Poor thing, she is very unwell, and there the thing rests for the present. Lord Egremont[2] and all his tribe are here. . . . George Brummel[3] is to be made Consul at Calais. The King has given his consent. I think he has great merit, after all that has passed. Some people are more partial to their enemies than kind to their friends!"

Mrs. Fitzherbert remained in London all the winter. During the spring (1828) Mrs. Fitzherbert's niece, Miss Smythe, who had lived with her since Mrs. Damer's marriage, became engaged to Captain Edward Stafford Jerningham,[4] second son of Lord Stafford. Mrs. Fitzherbert was delighted with the engagement of her niece to one of her own faith, and a member of a family whom she held in great esteem. In the summer she

[1] Charles Richard Sumner (1790–1874), Bishop of Winchester. Sumner was for some time tutor to Lord Francis Conyngham, and was in great favour with Lady Conyngham and George IV. He was successively appointed Librarian at Carlton House, Vicar of St. Helen's, Abingdon, Canon of Worcester, Bishop of Llandaff, and, in November 1827, Bishop of Winchester.

[2] George O'Brien Wyndham, third and last Earl of Egremont (1751–1837). He was a very wealthy peer, given to princely hospitality, a patron of the arts and of the turf. The "tribe" was composed of nine illegitimate children.

[3] George Bryan Brummel (1778–1840), the celebrated "Beau Brummel"; he was then living at Calais, but Mrs. Fitzherbert was incorrect. He was never Consul at Calais, but was appointed Consul at Caen in 1830.

[4] Hon. EDWARD JERNINGHAM (second son of Lord Stafford), 1804–1828, *m.* June 1828 MARY ANNE SMYTHE (niece of Mrs. Fitzherbert).

AUGUSTUS, Lord Stafford.	HENRY, present Lord Stafford.	EMILY CHARLOTTE, *m.* Basil Fitzherbert of Swynnerton.

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paid a visit to Costessy, Lord Stafford's place, and the marriage took place soon after.

Later Mrs. Fitzherbert went to Paris on a visit to the Damers, and she brought them back with her to London; in the autumn she went to Brighton for the winter. The Jerninghams spent Christmas with her, and the Damers came for the New Year (1829). During their visit, Mrs. Fitzherbert gave a fancy dress ball, which is thus described in a local paper: —

"Mrs. Fitzherbert's grand Fancy Dress Ball was not only the most splendid party given during the present season, but the most splendid probably ever seen in Brighton. There were more than two hundred present, including all the Fashionables now residing in the town. No magnificence can be conceived greater than that displayed in the various dresses, which were exceedingly rich; but they differed in one essential respect from the Fancy Balls which have before taken place here, there being a greater proportion of Court dresses and uniforms. The fine rooms of the noble mansion, thus lighted up, presented a most brilliant and dazzling appearance; and on the supper table every delicacy was seen in profusion. Kirchner's excellent quadrille band was in attendance. It always affords us great pleasure when we have to notice such magnificent *fêtes* as this, since independently of the immediate gratification afforded, the town is materially advanced by such acts of hospitality and munificence. We do hope that Mrs. Fitzherbert may long enjoy health to promote the prosperity of the town.

"Among those present were Lord Granville, who was dressed in Windsor uniform; Lord Shaftesbury, Lord and Lady Templetown, the Marchioness of Bristol, the Ladies Hervey, the Countess of Lindsey, Lady C. Stewart, and Lord Porchester, all of whom wore very rich dresses. Mrs. Fitzherbert, who, we are happy to say, looked in excellent health and spirits, wore a rich dress of white satin trimmed with blonde, and a white dress hat; Hon. Mrs. Dawson Damer, a handsome black fancy dress, head-dress of diamonds; Hon. Mrs. Jerningham, a black velvet dress, with a richly ornamented stomacher; Hon. Miss Jerningham, an elegant Grecian dress composed of tulle, ornamented with gold roses, head-dress of gold and roses; Miss Smythe, a beautiful Turkish dress, with handsome turban of

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scarlet and gold, and a profusion of diamonds; Miss C. Smythe looked most lovely in a simple white fancy dress, with a veil confined with a chaplet of white roses; Lady Charlotte Bertie, a rich and elegant Turkish dress, composed of graceful draperies of muslin and gold; Lady Emily Butler, 'Mary Queen of Scots'; Lady Ellenborough, 'Queen Elizabeth'; Miss Courtney Boyle, 'the widow of Ali Pacha'; Miss G. Courtney Boyle, 'Ariel' (this had a very singular and fanciful appearance); Lady Scott in the costume of 'A Lady of the Court of Elizabeth,' a rich dress composed of satin and pearls, head-dress of silver and pearls; Lady Falkiner, a rich Turkish dress of black and gold, garniture of gold flowers and satin, head-dress and stomacher brilliantly ornamented with diamonds; Lady Susan Hotham, in a Swiss costume, body of black velvet and petticoat of black silk with cherry-coloured rouleaux, a fancy hat of chip, trimmed with artificial flowers; Mrs. Montefiore, 'Queen Elizabeth,' a superb dress of gold lama, and white satin stomacher richly studded with jewels, and a head-dress of diamonds; Lady Coutts, a Spanish costume; Lady Beresford as a Sultana, and Lord Beresford as a Turkish Sultan; Countess St. Antonio, as 'the Goddess of Music'; Lady Gibbes, a Parisian costume. Many young ladies as Circassians and Swiss. A great number of the Officers of the Life Guards, Blues, and other Regiments, besides many Officers of the Navy and others in fancy dress and uniforms." [1]

Mrs. Fitzherbert went to Tilney Street in June, where she remained throughout the season. In good health and spirits, she returned to Brighton in September (1829); but as her house on the Steine was being repaired and re-decorated, she stayed at the Royal York Hotel. While she was there, the Duke and Duchess of Clarence arrived at Brighton from Dieppe, and landed at the Chain Pier. The Duke and Duchess did not land until dusk, and they were received by the Municipality bearing lanterns, and the pier was illuminated. The Duke and Duchess walked through an immense crowd to the Royal York Hotel, escorted by marines, and were received at the door by Mrs. Fitzherbert, the Marchioness of Downshire, and Lady Mary Hill. This was the first presentation of Mrs. Fitzherbert

[1] *Brighton Gazette*, January 14, 1829.

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to the Duchess of Clarence, who received her with great kindness and cordiality, and remained her friend the rest of her life. As to the Duke of Clarence, he had been much attached to Mrs. Fitzherbert for years, and always treated her as one of the family.

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CHAPTER XXVIII

THE DEATH OF THE KING

(1829–1830)

A CAUSE of right and justice in which Mrs. Fitzherbert had long been interested won a great victory this year (1829). Roman Catholic Emancipation passed into law. The election of that doughty champion of Roman Catholic claims, Daniel O'Connell, for county Clare the previous year, forced the matter to a crisis, and Emancipation came with a rush into the fore-front of politics. The Duke of Wellington, Peel, and other members of the Government, saw that it was impossible any longer to withhold this measure of justice, and prepared to yield to public opinion. But the King was violently hostile to the Catholic claims, and his hostility was inflamed by the Duke of Cumberland and Lady Conyngham. To Peel, who had submitted a memorandum on the subject, the King sent the following answer: "The sentiments of the King upon Catholic Emancipation are those of his revered and excellent father. From those sentiments the King never can, and never will, deviate." But the King's protest was of no avail. Loyal Roman Catholics had made every allowance for the conscientious, if mistaken, objections of George III., but they absolutely refused to extend the same indulgence to George IV., whom they regarded as a man of no principle. The Duke of Wellington, Peel, and other Ministers agreed in refusing to consider seriously the King's appeals to his conscience. So the King, after much shuffling, and with great reluctance, had to give way, and in his speech to Parliament on opening the session of 1829 announced a measure of relief.

The King, though yielding, was by no means vanquished. He intrigued with the Duke of Cumberland against his own Ministers. The Duke of Cumberland's interference led to a scene in the House of Lords, when the Dukes of Clarence and Sussex, who supported the Roman Catholic claims, attacked

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the Duke of Cumberland, and described his conduct as "infamous." Peel introduced a Roman Catholic Relief Bill, and the measure passed through both Houses by considerable majorities. By this measure a different form of oath was substituted for the oath of supremacy;[1] Roman Catholics were admitted to Parliament, and there was no office from which they were henceforth excluded except those of Regent, Lord Chancellor of England, Lord Chancellor of Ireland, and Viceroy of Ireland. Until the last the King threatened that he would abdicate rather than give the royal assent to such a measure, but when the time came he signed it (April 13, 1829), though not without a feeble protest. He wrote to the Lord Chancellor, "The King never before affixed his name with pain or regret to any Act of the Legislature."

Mrs. Fitzherbert, like all Roman Catholics, was much interested in the progress of this measure through Parliament, but she took no part in the agitation connected with it. Perhaps, knowing the King's strong prejudice to Emancipation, she was anxious not to widen the breach between them by publicly taking up an attitude of opposition to his views. After all, her advocacy would make no difference; she had no longer any influence in political matters; she knew that the King was feeble in health, bowed down by burdens of state, and unable to cope with his imperious Ministers. She had no wish to add, even remotely, to his worries. In the excited state of public opinion which preceded the passing of the Act, she avoided London, and remained at Brighton until the measure had received the royal assent. In her letters to Mrs. Damer at this time, she makes not the slightest reference to Emancipation, though it touched her nearly, or to the settlement of a question which had much to do with her final separation from the King. This may in part have been due to the fact that she and her adopted daughter were of different faiths, and the subject of religion was never touched upon between them. Her reserve can only be ascribed to prudence, not to indifference, for as the years went by she became more and more devoted to her Church, and everything connected with it. Though tolerant in her views, liberal in her charities, and giving freely to any

[1] This is now superseded by a general oath of allegiance. It was simplified in 1868.

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deserving person or institution, without distinction of creed, she never for a moment forgot that her own religion had the first claim on her. For years she had supported the Roman Catholic Mission at Brighton, and she now contributed £1000 towards the building of a church there, dedicated to St. John the Baptist, and gave liberally towards its support. She fitted up a beautiful little oratory in her house on the Steine, and she kept a resident chaplain, the Rev. William Lopez. Morning and evening she worshipped in her oratory with those of her household who were of her faith. The others she never attempted to influence in any way.

The Roman Catholic Relief Bill was the last act of George IV., if his act it could be called. The worry and distress which it caused him preyed upon his health. Neither the Roman Catholics nor the Ministers would give the King credit for sincerity in his opposition to Emancipation, yet he was undoubtedly sincere. Like George III., he considered it to be a breach of his coronation oath, and he felt that he had failed in his duty as a defender of the reformed religion. "Let them get a Catholic King in Clarence," he said bitterly, after the Bill had passed into law, and he threatened to go to Hanover and return no more to England. Of course a great deal of this unavailing lamentation was due to the state of the King's health, which was seriously affected by dropsy, gout, and accumulated ills. Down at Windsor he was slowly dying. He became more nervous and irritable every day, and at times was subject to partial blindness. His physical sufferings, which were agonising, he bore with the courage and fortitude of his race, but his mind showed signs of giving way under the strain. To this was probably due those strange humours, whims, and delusions which marked his declining days. He now lived at Windsor in almost oriental seclusion. He seldom went outside the park; all the roads were strongly guarded, no stranger was admitted inside the gates, and when he drove out his equerries rode on before to see that no one was spying. He drove in a low phaeton in the closely-guarded grounds, sometimes alone, sometimes with Lady Conyngham. The Lady Steward kept close watch over him; she saw that her reign would not be very long, and she tightened her grasp. She and Knighton ruled the King in private matters, as the Duke of Wellington did in public

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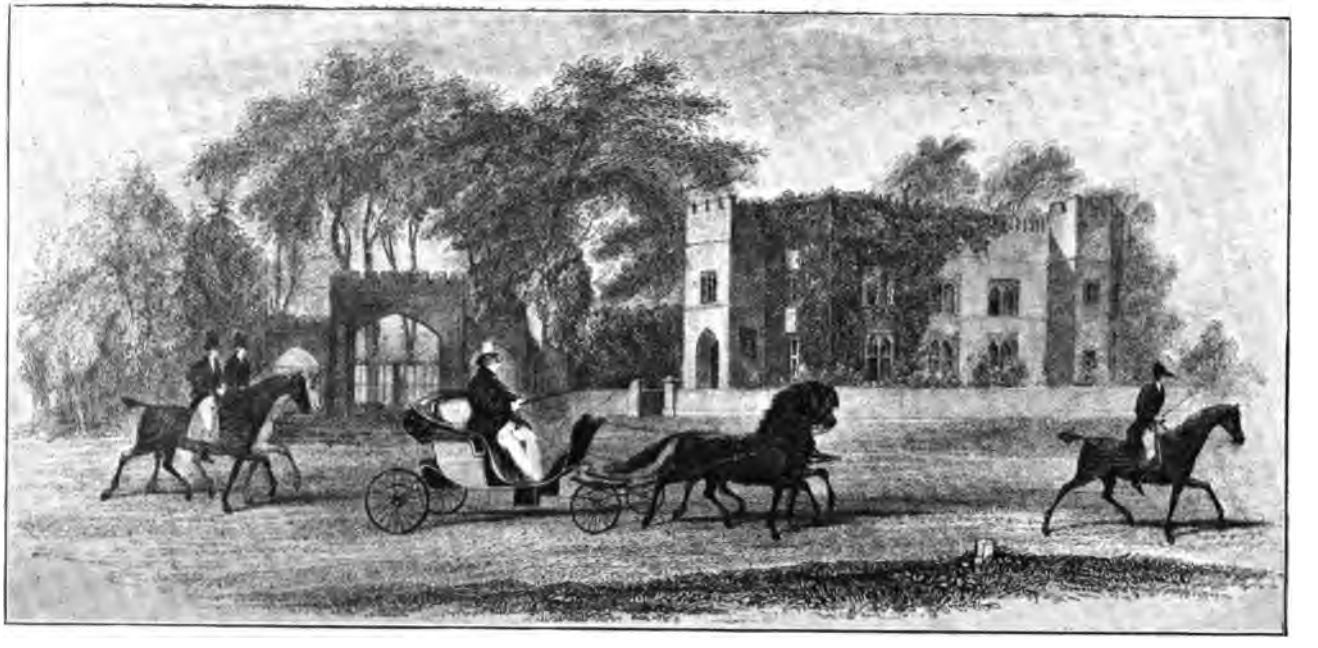

GEORGE IV. DRIVING AT WINDSOR

(*From an old Print*)

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affairs. Feeble and ailing, the King had no longer the strength to withstand any of them. Though he quarrelled with the Duke, he knew him to be a statesman who had the honour and welfare of the country at heart. He clung to Lady Conyngham because she amused him, and chased away the demon of depression, and he bore with Knighton because he was indispensable to him.

In the autumn of 1829 the King's physicians tried to raise him from his lethargy; they recommended a change of air, and advised him to go to Brighton. They failed, for both the Duke of Cumberland, who had now become the King's favourite brother, and Lady Conyngham were opposed to the idea. He was safe in their hands at Windsor, and they meant to keep him there. If he went further afield, who could tell what alien influence might come between them and him? At Brighton, especially, there was danger. The King had shown lately a habit of dwelling on the past, and in his wanderings the name of Mrs. Fitzherbert had more than once come to his lips. Some dormant chord in his memory vibrated; he thought of the woman he had loved, the wife he had forsaken, and tears sprang to his eyes, whether of remorse or maudlin sentiment, who shall say? Perhaps they were tears of self-pity, for the loneliness and lovelessness of his old age. Lady Conyngham noted these moods, and always turned the subject of Mrs. Fitzherbert adroitly aside; it was soon forgotten. But if the King went to Brighton early associations would be recalled to him in force, and with Mrs. Fitzherbert living next door who could say what might happen? True, the old lady was seventy-three, and could hardly be considered as a serious rival. But Lady Conyngham did not feel safe, and so, when the King was on the point of yielding to his doctors' advice and going to Brighton, she pretended to be very ill, and quite unable to leave Windsor. The King would not go anywhere without her, and the idea was abandoned. Some rumour of this may have reached Mrs. Fitzherbert's ears, for she writes:—

Mrs. Fitzherbert to the Hon. Mrs. Dawson Damer.

"BRIGHTON, *November* 10, 1829.

"There is some talk, my dear Minney, of the King coming here. I hear the Duke of Cumberland is *outrageous* with his

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Majesty for quitting the environs of Windsor. I fear we shall have the Duke here, though many people say that the King comes to Brighton to get rid of him. . . . But I do not expect the King will come. Lady Conyngham is seriously ill, and the Duke of Cumberland uses all his interest to prevent a visit here. The Pavilion is made quite ready to receive his Majesty, and some people think that he will come, but I do not think he will. . . . Think of me, Dearest, in this house quite alone, and unless I have you or the Jerninghams I am content to be so. I am perfectly comfortable, and everybody is so kind and good to me. My dear friend Lady Holland is my opposite neighbour. She sends constantly to inquire after me, and has been to see me, but I have not yet returned her visit. I gave you a poor account of myself in my last letter; I am now, thank God, quite well again, and have exerted myself to the utmost to make the inhabitants gay and happy. I wish I had you, Dearest, to assist me, for I am not able to do much; my mind is youthful, but my body is *very old;* the least thing fatigues me."

With the New Year, 1830, the King grew worse. To his other maladies were now added an affection of the heart and a difficulty of breathing. Yet still the doctors hoped that his strong constitution would pull him through. Conspicuous among these courtly physicians was Sir Henry Halford, an able, upright man. His enemies (all successful men have their enemies) dubbed him "the eel-backed baronet," and declared that "a flexible knee and supple back had enabled him 'to boo' his pretensions into the palace, and indeed into almost every nobleman's mansion in the kingdom." Sir Henry was one of the few disinterested people about George IV. in the last months of his life. Another, of course, was the Prime Minister, the Duke of Wellington, in whom at this crisis both the King and the heir-presumptive, the Duke of Clarence, placed absolute confidence. "In the critical state of his Majesty, the oftener you can find time to proceed to Windsor the better," wrote the Duke significantly, for he knew well the self-seekers with whom the dying monarch was surrounded. The hypocritical Knighton and the avaricious Lady Conyngham fought over him for mastery, each hating the other, yet neither strong enough to dislodge the other. Lady Conyngham, knowing that the sands

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were fast running out, took advantage of the King's condition to lay hands on whatever she could find, and no one dared to stop her. All the time she professed the greatest distress for the King's illness, and prayed with unction for his recovery. "First she packed, and then she prayed; and then she packed again," writes one.[1] Members of the royal family came occasionally to see the King; the Duke of Cumberland came frequently, and obtained donations for charities in which he was interested. But the poor King, whose lonely and unloved condition compelled pity, was hardly in a condition to see any one. His delusions increased, and his memory failed him; he passed most of his time in bed, and rarely quitted his room.

So things went on until May 1830, the King now rallying, now failing again; the mystery which always surrounds a royal sick-bed kept the people ignorant of his serious condition. But when it was announced in May that the levées and drawing-rooms were postponed, alarming rumours began to be circulated. Mrs. Fitzherbert, who was at Brighton, knew no more of the King's state of health than any one outside the inner circle of Windsor, but when it was announced that he would hold no court she wrote to Mrs. Damer, "I am sorry that the drawing-room is postponed; in my opinion there will be nothing of the sort this season. I am *very sorry* for the cause, and, for several reasons, it has worried me a good deal! But I hope the King will get well again, though I am sure he will not be able to hold either levée or drawing-room."

She had at this time no idea of the King's dangerous condition, but the thought of him ill and suffering aroused her sympathies, and she felt keenly that she, who was nearest to him, was at such a time kept at arm's length. She begged Mrs. Damer to let her know any scrap of news she heard.

Mrs. Fitzherbert to the Hon. Mrs. Dawson Damer.

"BRIGHTON, *Saturday morning.*

"I have this day got your letter, dearest Minney. George's[2]

[1] It is said that two waggon-loads of jewellery, plate, &c., were sent away from the Castle by Lady Conyngham during the last months of the King's illness.

[2] Colonel George Fitzclarence, eldest son by Mrs. Jordan of the Duke of Clarence (afterwards William IV.). He was created Earl of Munster in 1831.

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account the day before of what the Duke of Wellington reported had made me hope that the King was not so ill as rumour said, and that the drawing-room, &c., being put an end to, would relieve his mind. I remembered the King always liked to make himself out worse to excite compassion, and that he always wished every one to think him dangerously ill, when little was the matter with him. This I had hoped was the case at present, but, alas! I fear it is not so from your account, and from the accounts of others. I think I am better here than in town for a few days longer. The constant histories respecting the King, and people's curiosity to find out what I think, and what I do, would annoy me so much that, sad as it is here, I am spared many uncomfortable moments."

Again she writes a few days later, when the report was more favourable: —

"Your letter this morning, my dearest Minney, was very acceptable; for, having read an account of the King in the *Court Journal*, I did not know what to think. The number of falsehoods that are circulated, though I do not believe them, worry me sadly, and one does not know what to believe or on whom one can depend. I pray God he may recover. The thing that seems unpleasant is the physicians never leaving him, and the parade of the bulletins at St. James's, which formerly were never posted up except on very serious occasions. But perhaps the etiquette is altered now. I have now fixed my departure from this place for Wednesday next. I have passed my time here very quietly; I can always occupy myself, and I feel that, from indisposition and old age, this sort of life is the only thing that is fit for me."

Mrs. Fitzherbert lingered at Brighton, consumed with anxiety on the King's account. This anxiety she tried to conceal even from Mrs. Damer, for on the subject of her relations with the King she was always very reticent, even to her nearest and dearest. At last, when the news reached her that the King was really in danger, she determined to seek information at the fountain-head.

"I have," she writes to Mrs. Damer, "frequently intended writing to Sir Henry Halford. I have always delayed for fear of being thought intruding and curious, but your letter has

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given me courage, and I have by this night's mail dispatched a letter for him under cover to Whale [1] to leave at Sir Henry's door, for if it were known, in this gossiping place, that I had written, or received, a letter, a thousand falsehoods would be afloat."

The kind-hearted physician, who was an old and trusted friend of both the King and Mrs. Fitzherbert, sent her the following answer to her letter: —

Sir Henry Halford to Mrs. Fitzherbert.

"WINDSOR CASTLE, *June* 3, 1830.

"MY DEAR KIND MADAM, — I have not written a letter, nay not a note, since I came to Windsor on Sunday Se'nnight, excepting to such of the Royal Family as required information, and as it was my duty to give it. But I yield most willingly to our friendship what I should withhold on any other possible grounds and motives.

"The King has been, and continues to be, excessively ill, with embarrassment and difficulty of breathing. The worst circumstances under which I ever witnessed the Dukes of Clarence and Sussex, under their attacks of spasmodic asthma, hardly come up to his Majesty's distress at times. What is to be the result I can hardly venture to say with confidence. His Majesty's constitution is a gigantic one, and his elasticity under the most severe pressure exceeds what I have ever witnessed in thirty-eight years' experience. I think I can say with much more certainty what must be my *own* fate, unless a speedy amendment or fatal issue arrives soon, for I have devoted myself to his Majesty's service from a grateful sense of his confidence in me, as well as from my loyalty; and the constant calls upon my powers, both of body and mind, now press almost too heavily upon me, as they occur both night and day.

"Pray continue to believe me, my kind affectionate friend, my dear Mrs. Fitzherbert, your faithful and attached servant,

"HENRY HALFORD." [2]

[1] Mrs. Fitzherbert's butler in Tilney Street.

[2] This letter, which has never been published before, was found among Mrs. Fitzherbert's papers after her death.

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On receipt of this letter Mrs. Fitzherbert nerved herself to take a step which she never would have taken under any other circumstances. At the time she spoke no word of it, even to Mrs. Damer. The thought of the King, her husband, lying on his sick-bed, suffering and alone, moved her to the heart. At such a time all was forgotten and forgiven; all the wrongs and indignities he had heaped upon her. She conquered her pride, and her fear of repulse, and remembered only that she loved him. She wrote him the following letter, in which the conflict between her love and her pride can be clearly seen: —

Mrs. Fitzherbert to His Majesty the King.

"Sir, — After many repeated struggles with myself, from the apprehension of appearing troublesome or intruding upon Your Majesty, after so many years of continued silence, my anxiety respecting Your Majesty has got the better of my scruples, and I trust Your Majesty will believe me most sincere, when I assure you how truly I have grieved to hear of your sufferings. From the late account, I trust Your Majesty's health is daily improving, and no one will feel more rejoiced [than I] to learn Your Majesty is restored to complete convalescence, which I pray to God you may long enjoy, accompanied with every degree of happiness you could wish for, or desire.

"I have enclosed this letter to Sir H[enry] H[alford], as Your Majesty must be aware that there is no person about you through whom I could make a communication of so private a nature, attended with a perfect conviction of its never being divulged.

"I have the honour to be, &c." [1]

Mrs. Fitzherbert despatched this under cover to Sir Henry Halford, and besought him to give it to the King. She prayed that the answer would be a summons to the King's bedside, and she hurried up to London, so as to be nearer Windsor if need arose, though it was almost too much to hope that she

[1] The above copy of the undated latter which Mrs. Fitzherbert wrote to George IV. shortly before his death was written in her own handwriting, and was placed by her among the papers she deposited in Coutts's Bank in 1833, though it does not appear on Langdale's list. It is published here by gracious permission of his Majesty the King.

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would be sent for. Sir Henry Halford watched a favourable opportunity, and gave Mrs. Fitzherbert's letter to the King, telling him from whom it came. The King seized it with eagerness, read it with emotion, and placed it under his pillow, and then — apparently forgot all about it. Perhaps it was stolen from him while he was asleep, or put on one side lest he should recall its existence. At any rate no answer came to Mrs. Fitzherbert. She had written too late. The dying monarch had by now partly lost control of his faculties. He was incapable of remembering things, or of concentrating his mind upon any subject; part of the time he was unconscious, and most of the time asleep, and even when awake, he was often subject to strange delusions, though when he rallied he was able to talk coherently. His hands were so swollen and crippled with gout that he could no longer hold a pen, and he affixed a stamp to documents instead of the royal sign-manual. The Duke of Wellington and the physicians felt that the end was not far off. The Bishop of Chichester, Dr. Carr, formerly Vicar of Brighton, was commanded to Windsor. The King knew well what the Bishop's presence signified, and with quiet courage prepared himself to die. He had "two satisfactory interviews" with the Bishop, who prayed with him, and he read a good deal from the Bible which had been placed by his bedside.

The King lingered, now rallying, now falling back, until the evening of Friday the 25th of June. His physicians then told him they could do no more, and that his death was only a question of hours. To this the King replied, "God's will be done," and a few moments later he asked, "Where is Chichester?" The Bishop of Chichester was summoned, and from his hands the dying King received the last Sacrament. After this, he composed himself to sleep. Sir Wathen Waller remained with him, Sir Henry Halford having retired to get a few hours' rest. The King slept quietly until nearly three o'clock, when he awoke, complained of a fainting sensation, and asked for sal-volatile. When it was brought to him he could not drink it; and pressing the hand of Waller, he exclaimed, "My boy, this is death." At that moment Sir Henry Halford, who had been hastily summoned, entered the room. The King gave him his hand, but could not speak, and a few minutes later

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breathed his last — at a quarter to three o'clock on June 26, 1830.

Thus died George IV. in the sixty-eighth year of his age and the eleventh of his reign. He has been one of the most abused of our English kings; yet now, some seventy years after his death, when the mists of passion and prejudice which obscured his memory have to some extent cleared away, it is beginning to be seen that the judgment passed on him was too harsh. Even he had his good qualities, some of them lovable. His faults were many and grave, but some of them were very human, and others were almost inevitable from his education and environment. It does not fall within the scope of this book to touch upon his life, except so far as it relates to the woman whom he wedded in his youth, wronged in his mature years, and neglected in his old age. His conduct to her may be palliated, but it can never be justified; yet even here much of it was due to inherent defects in his character, which was unstable as water. It is easy for those who live far removed by time and circumstances from his difficulties and temptations, to condemn him. We at least will not add to that condemnation, but remember only that there must have been good in him, or a good woman would not have loved him.

"He has out-soared the shadow of our night,
Envy and calumny and hate and pain;
And that unrest which men miscall delight,
Can touch him not, and torture not again."

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THE STATUE OF GEORGE IV. AT BRIGHTON

(*By* Sir FRANCIS CHANTREY)

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CHAPTER XXIX

THE MINIATURE

(1830–1831)

WHILE these scenes were being enacted at Windsor, Mrs. Fitzherbert was waiting in London for the message that never came. The first knowledge of the King's death was conveyed to her by one who had heard the tolling of the great bell of St. Paul's. Later in the day came a kind message from the new King, William IV., who, even in the bustle and confusion consequent on his accession, did not forget what was due to his brother's widow.[1]

A week later, when all that was mortal of George IV. was laid to rest at Windsor, there came to Mrs. Fitzherbert Sir Henry Halford, who told her of the King's last moments, and of the way he had welcomed her letter. No doubt he explained to her that, in the King's dying condition, an answer was well-nigh impossible. His words brought her slight consolation, for she afterwards said that "nothing had so 'cut her up' as not having received one word in reply to that last letter."[2] Later again came tidings which brought her more comfort. William IV. had sent her back, a few days after his brother's funeral, many of the jewels, trinkets, and miniatures which from time to time she had given the late King. They were found in George IV.'s cabinet; but one trinket was missing, and for this Mrs. Fitzherbert made particular inquiries. In the early days of their married life the Prince of Wales had given Mrs. Fitzherbert a large diamond. She had two tiny miniatures, one of herself, and one of the Prince, painted (it is said) by Cosway.

[1] "On the death of his brother, he (William IV.) sent the Duke of Sussex to Mrs. Fitzherbert to put her servants into mourning for his brother, yet he would have none himself, nor allow those around him to wear it." — "Greville Memoirs."

[2] Langdale, *op. cit.* p. 136.

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The diamond was cut in two, and each of the miniatures was covered with the half-diamond, and set round with tiny brilliants. The whole formed two small lockets. The Prince took possession of the one containing the miniature of Mrs. Fitzherbert, and she of the other containing his portrait; both vowed they would wear them always in memory of their love. The trinket now missing was the miniature of Mrs. Fitzherbert which she had given to the King. She remembered how, in the will he had made in her favour more than thirty years ago, he had given directions that "*the picture of my beloved wife, my Maria Fitzherbert, may be interred with me, suspended round my neck with a ribbon, as I used to wear it when I lived, and placed right upon my heart.*" She wondered now if he had kept his word, and this last touching proof of his love would be granted to her. The fact that it was missing was in her favour, yet, after all these years of silence, she hardly dared to hope. She wrote to William IV. asking that search might be made for the miniature, and if found that it might be returned to her. The good-natured King caused inquiries to be made concerning it, and with the following result, which he bade Captain George Seymour, brother of Mrs. Damer, communicate to Mrs. Fitzherbert without delay: —

Captain Seymour, R.N., to Mrs. Fitzherbert.

"*Tuesday morning.*

"My dear Mrs. Fitzherbert, — The King sent me yesterday evening to desire I would tell you that he had caused inquiries to be made about the little picture of yourself in a gold case, and that he had every reason to believe that it was *not* removed from the late King's neck. Sir Frederick Watson confirms this circumstance, which must afford you some satisfaction, however melancholy it will be, and I believe they are right, as it was seen on his neck a twelvemonth back also. Yours affectionately, my dear Mrs. Fitzherbert,

"G. F. Seymour."

Further confirmation was later forthcoming from the Duke of Wellington, whom the late King had appointed his executor. When he was on his deathbed George IV. gave the Duke strict

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injunctions to see that nothing should be removed from his body after death, and that he should be buried in the night-clothes in which he lay. He referred to the matter more than once. The Duke promised that his Majesty's wishes should be obeyed, and the King seemed much happier for this assurance. After George IV.'s death the Duke saw that his wishes were carried out to the letter; the body was disturbed as little as possible, and nothing was taken from it. Left alone with the body, which was then lying in an open coffin, the Duke noticed that something was suspended from the King's neck by a much worn black ribbon. He was seized with an uncontrollable desire to see what it was, and coming nearer he drew aside the collar of the shirt and lo! upon the dead man's breast was the tiny locket containing the miniature of Mrs. Fitzherbert. The Duke reverently drew the night-shirt over the jewel again, so that none might see. The motive of the King's dying request was now apparent to him, and the Duke saw that it was fulfilled. The King was buried with the miniature next his heart.[1]

It was not until some little time after George IV.'s death that the Duke of Wellington told Mrs. Dawson Damer, whom he met at dinner in London, that he had seen the missing miniature. It was evidently on his conscience to do so, for he told the story with some hesitation, and when he confessed to the curiosity which had led him to examine the locket, he blushed like a girl. The confession seemed to afford him relief, and he told Mrs. Damer that he left it to her discretion to tell Mrs. Fitzherbert or not. Mrs. Damer deemed it best to wait her opportunity, for Mrs. Fitzherbert was very reticent on all that concerned the late King. But one day, when Mrs. Damer had led the conversation in that direction, she ventured to tell her of the Duke's story. Mrs. Fitzherbert listened without a

[1] Lord Albemarle in his "Memoirs," and Mary Frampton in her "Diary," both relate this story. I have been told it also by one of the daughters of the late Mrs. Dawson Damer, who had it from her mother's lips. Further corroboration is afforded by Mr. Charles Bodenham of Rotherwas, a connection of Mrs. Fitzherbert. He made inquiries of the Bishop of Chichester, who had attended George IV. in his last illness, who said, on his mentioning the name of Mrs. Fitzherbert, "Oh, she was very amiable — my faithful friend. Yes, it is very true what you heard, I mean about the body of the King, when they wrapped it round in the cere-cloth; but before that was done I saw a portrait suspended round his neck." — Langdale, "Memoirs."

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word, but presently Mrs. Damer saw that she was quietly weeping.[1]

Though Mrs. Fitzherbert said not a word, it was evident that she derived comfort from this pathetic proof of the King's affection. The cynic may say that it did not amount to much, but to her it seemed a great deal, and compensated for the fact that she had received no answer to her letter. He had sinned against her, it was true, but this seemed to show that his heart had been hers always. Now that he was dead she remembered only what was good in him. No word of blame or reproach crossed her lips — she forgave all, perhaps because she understood all; she remembered only that he had been her husband and she had loved him.

Several members of the royal family paid her visits, or wrote her letters of condolence; all her friends called on her and showed much sympathy, but she saw none of them. She remained in London through the summer, and lived in close retirement.

Apart from her grief, the death of George IV. brought upon Mrs. Fitzherbert considerable anxiety. She distrusted Knighton, the late King's secretary, and she did not know what use he might make of the letters she had written to George IV., should any fall into his hands; she believed him capable of any baseness. Moreover, George IV.'s death affected her pecuniarily. She held the mortgage on the Pavilion at Brighton which had been procured for her by the Duke of York and Queen Charlotte. This guaranteed her an annuity of £6000 a year for life. The Duke of Wellington was one of the late King's executors, and to him she appealed to know how she stood. Sir William Knighton, who was the other executor, endeavoured to interfere, but Mrs. Fitzherbert absolutely refused to have any communication with him whatever. The Duke was not altogether friendly to her, but she knew him to be a man of honour and a gentleman — Knighton, she said, was neither. William IV. was of course appealed to, but he

[1] Mrs. Fitzherbert left the companion locket, the one composed of the other half of the diamond, and containing the miniature of George IV., to Mrs. Damer. At her death Mrs. Damer bequeathed it to her eldest daughter, the late Countess Fortescue. It has now passed into the possession of Lady Fortescue's daughter-in-law, Countess Fortescue, who kindly allowed me to have a photograph of this interesting heirloom taken for this book. The photograph is the exact size of the miniature.

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(*a*) OPEN

(*b*) CLOSED

LOCKET CONTAINING MINIATURE OF GEORGE, PRINCE OF WALES

(*Companion of the locket given by the Prince to Mrs. Fitzherbert soon after their marriage, containing her Miniature, which is buried with the King at Windsor. This is the exact size of the original. By permission of the* Countess FORTESCUE.

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left the settlement of the matter in the hands of the Duke, premising that Mrs. Fitzherbert should receive most favourable consideration. The Duke was a Tory of the old school, and he held above all things that the law must be obeyed. Mrs. Fitzherbert had married the late King in defiance of the law, therefore the Duke held she was not married to him at all. But if the Duke was hard and unsympathetic, he was also just, and he recognised that she had special claims to consideration. He asked her if she had any papers which would constitute a claim upon the estate of the late King; she told him "she had not even a scrap of paper, for that she had never in her life been an interested person." [1] Fortunately there was at this time in London Colonel Gurwood, who was not only a great friend of Mrs. Fitzherbert, but the private secretary of the Duke of Wellington; he therefore enjoyed the confidence of both, and acted as a medium between them. Mrs. Fitzherbert looked to him to check the machinations (real or imaginary) of Sir William Knighton, whom she persisted in regarding as her enemy. All this anxiety worried her sadly. The following letter, which she wrote on her seventy-fourth birthday to Mrs. Dawson Damer, shows this: —

"TILNEY STREET, *Sunday, July 26*, 1830.

"MY DEAREST MINNEY, — I was so worried with all the *tracasseries* of yesterday that I could not sleep, and therefore got up early and went to ten o'clock church. I am just returned, when I found your dear little note and the beautiful fan you were so kind as to send me; it is too fine for me, but very beautiful, and I beg you to accept my best thanks for it. My carriage is at your disposal, for I shall make no use of it, therefore send and order it whenever you wish to have it. I know you do not like going out on a Sunday, but perhaps later in the day you may be at liberty; you will be sure of finding me at all hours, and there is no one I shall be happier to see. Don't wish me happy returns of this day; I do not desire them for myself. I often regret (tho' I am told it is wrong) that I ever was born, but I won't touch upon this subject, as I don't wish to hurt your feelings, and because I hope and believe you have

[1] Langdale's "Memoirs," p. 142. Lord Stourton relates this. Yet she had the deed on the Pavilion.

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an affection for me. Mine towards you since your earliest infancy has never diminished. I won't bore you any longer, but merely add that my most sincere affection and good wishes ever have existed, and do exist, in the greatest degree towards you and yours. Your truly and affectionately attached,

"M. F.-H."

A week or two later she wrote to Mrs. Damer of the progress of her affairs: —

"TILNEY STREET, *August*—, 1830.

"I am getting every day better, and I think I owe it chiefly to having declined all torment with lawyers, &c. But now I am to begin this day, having received a letter from the Duke of Wellington, who comes to me this morning. The more I hear of my business the more certain I am that nothing on earth will be done for me. I see Fitzclarence [1] every day, but alas! the King and Wellington have, I fear, settled everything their own way, without any other person being able to alter their opinion. Luckily I have the deed for the charge on the Pavilion, or I should be penniless.[2] All this worry makes me feel quite unwell and good for nothing, and I wish I were a hundred miles away from London. As soon as this business is settled I shall go to Brighton, where I do hope to be a little quiet, but for my misfortune, the whole set of Royalties go there on the 30th, so what I shall do I know not. I have some thoughts of going to Malvern to enjoy a little rest and quiet at a distance from all the world. Halford and Jones both assure me rest and tranquillity are absolutely necessary to restore my strength and give me health."

The Duke of Wellington, with the King's sanction, did not take long to settle Mrs. Fitzherbert's affairs. The matter was finally arranged on this basis: Mrs. Fitzherbert was to be continued the annuity of £6000 a year which had been guaranteed

[1] Captain George Fitzclarence, eldest son of William IV., afterwards first Earl of Munster.

[2] This must be taken as a figure of speech, for even if Mrs. Fitzherbert had lost the £6000 a year guaranteed her by the deed on the Pavilion, she would still have had her jointure of nearly £2000 a year under the will of Mr. Fitzherbert, her houses in London and Brighton, and whatever money she might have put by.

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to her by the deed on the Pavilion; on the other hand, and in consideration of the annuity, she was to abandon any other claim which she might have on the estate of the late King. The following letter sufficiently explains matters:—

The Duke of Wellington to Mrs. Fitzherbert.

"WALMER CASTLE, *August* 15, 1830.

"MY DEAR MADAM,—Mr. Lowdham has sent here the copies of papers which I will have submitted to you by the hands of your collector, Mr. Forster, by which the King will provide for the payment of your annuity charged upon Brighton, and you will release the late King's personal property from any demand you might have upon it on account of that annuity. I recommend you to sign that release. In truth, if your annuity is charged upon the property at Brighton, your release of the personal is necessary only to enable the executors of the late King's will to hand over the whole of the personal property to the Treasury. Believe me, ever your most faithful servant,

"WELLINGTON." [1]

William IV.'s order for the payment of Mrs. Fitzherbert's annuity ran as follows: —

"WILLIAM R.

"It is Our Royal will and pleasure that the Keeper of Our Privy Purse, for the time being, do, and shall during Our life pay to Maria Fitzherbert of Tilney Street, in the county of Middlesex, Widow, during her life an Annuity, or annual sum of £6000, by four equal quarterly payments in the year; that is to say Lady Day, Midsummer Day, Michaelmas Day, and Christmas Day, the first payment to be made on Michaelmas Day next, in payment of an Annuity or annual sum of £6000 charged upon certain Freehold and Copyhold Property, belonging to his late Majesty King George IV., situated at Brighton in the county of Sussex by an Indenture dated 16th March 1808.

[1] The above letter has been given me for publication in this book by Miss Adèle Gurwood, daughter of the late Colonel Gurwood, private secretary of the Duke of Wellington, and one of Mrs. Fitzherbert's executors.

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"Given at our Palace at Windsor the 18th day of August, in the first year of our Reign (1830)."

With this arrangement Mrs. Fitzherbert had to be content. She writes, a few days after the matter was settled, to Mrs. Damer: —

"TILNEY STREET, *August* 28, 1830.

"I am better, and hope that a change of scene and air at Brighton will restore me, for I have been *dreadfully* worried, but I hope now that I shall be quiet. I am sadly grieved at all the Royalties going so much sooner than they had intended to Brighton. I am determined to keep as far off them as I can. I desired Gurwood to write and tell you the finality of my wretched business—I had not courage to write about it myself."

Mrs. Fitzherbert went down to Brighton on the morrow. The day after, August 30, William IV. and Queen Adelaide made their public entry into Brighton amid great rejoicings, the booming of cannon, the music of bands, the presentation of addresses, &c., &c. The loyal Brightonians were overjoyed at the new King's promise that he would not desert Brighton. On September 3, four thousand children were entertained to a free dinner on the Steine under Mrs. Fitzherbert's windows. The King and Queen visited the festivities. Two days later Mrs. Fitzherbert writes to Mrs. Damer: —

"BRIGHTON, *September* 5, 1830.

"We have, thank God, got a little quiet here. There never was anything like the public *fêtes* and rejoicings we have had, but I, except for seeing what passed out of my windows, have not joined the gay throng. I am still a poor creature, and cannot regain my strength. . . . The Royalties are living very quietly, nobody at the Pavilion but the family; the only visitors are Mr. and Mrs. St. Clair;[1] she was the daughter of Lord Huntingtower. The town is so full you can scarcely drive along the streets, but except the Worcesters[2] and Lady Ald-

[1] Hon. Katherine Camilla, married 1816 to George Sinclair, Esq., afterwards Sir George Sinclair, Bart.

[2] The Marquess of Worcester, who succeeded 1835 his father, as seventh Duke of Beaufort, and his second wife, Emily Frances, daughter of Charles Culling-Smith, Esq.

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boro'[1] not a face I ever saw before except the inhabitants. . . . The Duke of Cambridge's son[2] is here, and he brought him to see me the other day. I never saw a more delightful boy, very good-looking; the Duke remains in England till after the meeting of Parliament. What confusion there is all over the Continent.[3] I am sadly afraid we shall get into some scrape in consequence.

Despite the festivities consequent on his coming to Brighton the kind-hearted King was not unmindful of Mrs. Fitzherbert, and sent her a message, through his son, Colonel George Fitzclarence, to ask her why she did not come to see him and the Queen at the Pavilion. Mrs. Fitzherbert then wrote to the King to say that her position was peculiarly difficult, and she had something to show him before she could obey his command, and wait upon him at the Pavilion. Moreover she was ill and suffering, and she begged him to do her the honour to first pay her a visit at her own house. The good-natured King went round to see Mrs. Fitzherbert the very next day without any ceremony. She received him, dressed in mourning, in her drawing-room on the first floor (she was too ill to go downstairs), the windows of which looked across the Steine to the beautiful bronze statue of George IV. by Chantrey, then recently erected.[4] The King greeted her with great kindness and affection; she recalled her long and intimate friendship with William IV., and resolved to tell him everything. No one else was present at this historic interview, but a year or two later Mrs. Fitzherbert gave Lord Stourton an account of what passed.

"Upon her placing in his [the King's] hands the documents which have been preserved in justification of her character, and especially the certificate of her marriage, and another interesting and most affecting paper, this amiable Sovereign was moved

[1] Elizabeth, Dowager Countess of Aldborough, daughter of the Hon. and Rev. Frederick Hamilton, who married 1777 John, third Earl of Aldborough. He died in 1823; she survived him until 1845.

[2] Adolphus Frederick, Duke of Cambridge (1774–1850), seventh son of George III., Viceroy of Hanover, and his son, Prince George of Cambridge (1819–1904), afterwards second Duke of Cambridge, Commander-in-Chief.

[3] The French and Belgian Revolutions of 1830.

[4] This statue was erected in 1828. The contract with Chantrey was for 3000 guineas, but it cost the great sculptor over 6000 guineas. It is a masterpiece of art, and one of the few beautiful things in Brighton. It is now in a neglected condition, and obscured by stunted trees which have been planted right in front of it!

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to tears by their perusal, and expressed his surprise at so much forbearance with such documents in her possession, and under the pressure of such long and severe trials. He asked her what amends he could make her, and offered to make her a Duchess. She replied, that she did not wish for any rank; that she had borne through life the name of Mrs. Fitzherbert; that she had never disgraced it, and did not wish to change it; that, therefore, she hoped his Majesty would accept her unfeigned gratitude for his gracious proposal, but that he would permit her to retain her present name.

"'Well, then,' said he, 'I shall insist upon your wearing my livery,' and ended by authorising her to put on widow's weeds for his royal brother. He added, 'I must, however, soon see you at the Pavilion;' and I believe he proposed the following Sunday, a day on which his family were more retired, for seeing her at dinner, and spending the evening at the Pavilion. 'I shall introduce you myself to my family,' said he, 'but you must send me word of your arrival.' The King then took his leave."[1]

A few days later Mrs. Fitzherbert, in obedience to the King s command, dined at the Pavilion. When the carriage drove up to the door the King himself came out to receive her, handed her from the carriage, and gave her his arm into the house, where he presented her to Queen Adelaide, to his sister, the Princess Augusta, and the other members of his family "as one of themselves." At dinner he placed her next him, and treated her in every way as an honoured guest. Mrs. Fitzherbert wrote the following account of this visit: —

Mrs. Fitzherbert to the Hon. Mrs. Dawson Damer.

"BRIGHTON, *September* 10, 1830.

"MY DEAREST MINNEY, — There is nobody I write to so often as yourself, though you are well aware that my pen and

[1] The *Brighton Herald* of September 9, 1820, has the following: — "In the early part of the afternoon of last Monday, his Majesty (William IV.) honoured Mrs. Fitzherbert with a visit of about three-quarters of an hour. When the King came out of Mrs. Fitzherbert's, some person rather shabbily dressed went up to the carriage as it left the door and presented a note to the servants, requesting them to give it to his Majesty. This not being complied with, the fellow pushed forward and dropped the note into the carriage through the window. The Duke of Cambridge has visited Mrs. Fitzherbert several times. On Tuesday Mrs. Fitzherbert left her name at the Pavilion."

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I are always at war. Nothing can be more amiable towards me than the inhabitants of the Pavilion. I have been asked there frequently, but being so lame I have not been able to profit of their invitation till the day before yesterday, when I hobbled into the house as well as I could. My reception was most flattering. I was overwhelmed with kisses from male and female; the Princess (Augusta) was particularly gracious. I felt rather nervous, never having been in the Pavilion since I was drove away by Lady Hertford. I cannot tell you of my astonishment at the magnificence, and the total change in that house since my first acquaintance with it.[1] They lead a very quiet life — his family the only inhabitants. I think I counted to-day eight Fitzclarences.[2] George Fitzclarence comes next week. You never saw people appear so happy as they all do. Pray remember me most kindly to George (Colonel Damer), and with many kisses to the chicks,[3] believe me, my dearest Minney, yours affectionately.

"M. F.-H."

Speaking of this dinner party, Mrs. Fitzherbert told Lord Stourton that she was much surprised at the great composure with which she was able to sustain the trial of fortitude which appeared so alarming at a distance. She believed the excitement had sustained her. It was not so at the next dinner at which she was present in the same family circle. The many reflections which then oppressed her mind very nearly overpowered her. The next morning Mrs. Fitzherbert received this kind little note: —

Her Majesty the Queen to Mrs. Fitzherbert.

"DEAR MADAM, — I hope you passed a good night, and have not suffered from it. This fine day will, I hope, enable

[1] George IV. had redecorated and enlarged the Pavilion since Mrs. Fitzherbert had withdrawn from it in 1810.

[2] The Fitzclarences were: (1) George, first Earl of Munster; (2) Frederick, in the Army; (3) Adolphus, a Rear-Admiral; (4) Augustus, in Holy Orders; (5) Sophia, married the first Lord de l'Isle and Dudley; (6) Mary, married General Fox; (7) Elizabeth, married the Earl of Erroll; (8) Augusta, married first the Hon. John Kennedy-Erskine, and secondly Lord John Frederick Gordon; (9) Amelia, married Viscount Falkland. All the eight younger children were raised to the rank of the younger children of a marquis.

[3] Mrs. Damer had two children at that time.

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you to take a drive, which I am certain will do you much good. I was delighted to see you looking so well yesterday, and trust we shall meet oftener next winter than we have done this year. Accept my best wishes for your health and happiness, and believe me, my dear Mrs. Fitzherbert, yours sincerely,

"ADELAIDE."

Mrs. Fitzherbert had meant to leave for London, but now she stayed on a little longer. During the remainder of her sojourn at Brighton, she frequently dined at the Pavilion *en famille*, and received the greatest kindness and consideration from the King and Queen. She writes to Mrs. Damer: —

"BRIGHTON, *October* 1, 1830.

"Although you have forbad, my dearest Minney, my going to town, I cannot comply with your wish, and therefore you will see me arrive next Tuesday. I am now, thank God, got quite well again,[1] and able to enjoy a little society, which from indisposition I have been deprived of almost the whole time I have been here. I shall be delighted to see you. I promise I will not bore or annoy you, but I really cannot stay at Brighton any longer, having no one but a man and a maid, and not being able to ask anybody to eat their fish and mutton with me, which is rather uncomfortable. I am going to-day to dine at the Pavilion, and to-morrow with Lady Aldboro', who keeps open house and has very good parties, but is sadly mortified at having her Company often taken from her to dine with the Royalties, and never once being invited herself. I think it is very hard upon her, particularly as she has taken a house here and furnished it with her fine things from Paris, and means to make Brighton her home. I never saw this place so full in my life; you can scarcely get along the streets for the number of carriages, very smart, and the owners dressed out as if going to some entertainment, but not a face you ever saw before."

Mrs. Fitzherbert went to London a few days after, but returned to Brighton in December. She was eagerly expected.

[1] "We understand that Mrs. Fitzherbert has derived very essential benefit from drinking the waters of the chalybeate at the Wick, Brighton." — *Brighton Gazette*, September 23, 1830.

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A local paper writes, "The return of Mrs. Fitzherbert, that excellent benefactress and patroness of this town, to her Steine mansion, which continues to be anxiously looked for, will in all probability offer the signal for the resumption of the splendid pleasures called the 'local Almack's' at the fine rooms of the Old Ship Hotel. Our younger Fashionables are becoming quite impatient of further delay."[1] Mrs. Fitzherbert came a few days later, but "the younger Fashionables" had to wait a little longer, for she resigned her position as Lady Patroness of the Balls on the plea of ill-health (in reality, on account of her deep mourning for the late King). Three ladies were appointed her successors. "On retiring from this appointment," writes our chronicler, "Mrs. Fitzherbert takes with her the respect of the fashionable community, on account of the disinterested and impartial manner in which she disposed of the numerous claims made for admission."[2]

Mrs. Fitzherbert writes to Mrs. Dawson Damer: —

"BRIGHTON, *December* 30, 1830.

"I have been very busy giving up being patroness to the balls, and have had some trouble to get ladies to take my place. I must say they have been very kind to me. The three new patronesses are Lady Jane Peel, Lady George Seymour, and Lady Elizabeth Dickens. I believe my house would have been set on fire if they had not had a ball last night. . . . I am quite happy at the thought of seeing you all, but I must beg of you not to come till the day *after* the New Year, as I have many weeks ago promised the King to dine with him on the 31st and New Year's Day. I should be quite miserable to be absent from you when you arrive, but you are well aware that I cannot send an excuse to the Pavilion. I have been there frequently, sometimes when I was scarcely able to go, and nothing could exceed the kindness, I may say the affectionate conduct, of the whole party towards me."

Colonel and Mrs. Damer and their children came to stay with Mrs. Fitzherbert a few days after the New Year. The

[1] *Brighton Guardian*, December 8, 1830.

[2] These private subscription dances were continued until recent years, the lady patronesses being increased to six.

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King asked them to dinner with her at the Pavilion, and we find her giving an evening party in their honour.[1]

The King and Queen gave many entertainments at the Pavilion this winter, including a children's party, at which Queen Adelaide introduced for the first time into England the German Christmas-tree. To all these festivities Mrs. Fitzherbert and her guests were bidden. At the end of January their Majesties gave a ball at the Pavilion which is thus described: —

"The floor of the music-room was chalked in the most beautiful manner with the royal arms in the centre; upwards of 800 of the inhabitants and gentry of the county had the honour of receiving cards of invitation. . . . It was at a very late hour before the most brilliant entertainment ever witnessed in this town concluded. Prince George of Cambridge had for his partners Lady d'Estaing and Mrs. Fox. He seemed in high spirits, and danced with ease and elegance. Their Majesties, the Duke of Sussex, the Landgravine of Hesse-Homburg, Princess Augusta, and the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester witnessed the gay and happy scene with evident delight. His Majesty conversed with his guests with the greatest affability, *particularly with Mrs. Fitzherbert*, who looked exceedingly well, and whose sweetness and dignity of expression are proof against the attacks of time. The Queen by her amiable condescension excited the admiration of all. The splendour of the scene was beyond description, and the dresses of the ladies were only exceeded by their personal charms."[2]

Mrs. Fitzherbert was at this time an almost indispensable guest at the court of William IV. The King did all in his power to mark his respect for his brother's widow. He invited her frequently to the court festivities, not only at Brighton, but at St. James's. Her position was semi-royal. Except on official occasions, such as drawing-rooms, she attended all the court entertainments. The drawing-rooms she did not attend, because there would have arisen the delicate question of her

[1] "Colonel and Mrs. Dawson Damer are staying here on a visit to Mrs. Fitzherbert, who, we are happy to learn, is better, and dined with the King on Sunday. Last night Mrs. Fitzherbert gave a large evening party, including all the persons attached to the Court who are still in Brighton." — *Brighton Gazette*, January 12, 1832.

[2] *Brighton Herald*, January 29, 1831.

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precedence. By refusing the rank of duchess, and retaining her name of Fitzherbert, she could claim none except by courtesy, but by her refusal she had strengthened her position. Her acceptance of the King's offer would have been liable to misunderstanding. She had, as she remarked once before, "no wish to be a second Duchess of Kendal":[1] she might have added, a Duchess of Portsmouth,[2] or many another King's mistress. Her claim was that she was the late King's wife, though not his Queen. Therefore, while refusing to be created a duchess, she gladly availed herself of the King's offer that she should put her servants into the Royal livery, for it was a quasi-public acknowledgment of her peculiar position. The only thing now wanting to complete her happiness was the public acknowledgment of the *fact* of her marriage. Not its legality — that she had never insisted upon, for she knew it to be illegal; but the acknowledgment that a ceremony of marriage had taken place between herself and the late King. To explain her eagerness on this point, it must be remembered that not only her marriage, but the fact that she had been through any ceremony at all, had been publicly denied in the House of Commons, and that denial had never been set right. All that she asked now was that the truth should be told as publicly as the falsehood had been, so that, as she said, she might die without a slur on her name.

Had the matter rested with William IV., she would doubtless have had her way. Though the King, like most of the royal family, had long known that some form of marriage had taken place between his brother and Mrs. Fitzherbert, he had no idea, until she had shown him the papers in her possession, that the ceremony had been of so solemn and binding a nature — not binding in law, but doubly so in religion and honour. The moment William IV. realised that Mrs. Fitzherbert was canonically the late King's wife, he did everything in his power to repair the wrong. He would have done more, but the Duke of Wellington set his face like a flint against any public acknowledgment of the marriage. The Duke, as we have already pointed out, held that as Mrs. Fitzherbert had broken the law of the land when she went through a ceremony of marriage with

[1] Mistress of George I. [2] Mistress of Charles II.

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the heir to the throne, therefore she must abide by the consequences of her illegal act. Moreover, the matter was complicated now, as always, by the fact that she was a Roman Catholic. And why, the Duke argued, to satisfy the scruples of an old woman of nearly eighty, should they rake up again a dead scandal — a scandal which would bring discredit on the monarchy, already sufficiently discredited. The King (William IV.), in the opinion of the Duke of Wellington, had done all that was necessary, and even more than was necessary, to compensate Mrs. Fitzherbert for any hardship that she might have suffered, and there let the matter rest. There is no doubt that the Duke acted in this, as in all things, from a high sense of public duty, and the Duke at this time, as Prime Minister, was practically dictator, and so he had his way. There was no public acknowledgment of the marriage, and Mrs. Fitzherbert went down to her grave with a doubt in many minds whether she had ever been married to George IV. at all.

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CHAPTER XXX

THE REFORM BILL

(1830–1832)

THOUGH Mrs. Fitzherbert now lived quite apart from public life, her interest in political affairs continued to be keen. The times were troublous and exciting; abroad, the revolution in France, by which Charles X. was driven from his throne, and Louis Philippe became King of the French, added to the spirit of unrest throughout Europe. At home, the carrying of Roman Catholic Emancipation had given an impetus to the great cause of Parliamentary Reform. Mrs. Fitzherbert had favoured the former measure because it affected her religion, but she was by no means well-disposed towards the latter. In politics she was an old-fashioned Tory, though many of the benefits conferred upon her co-religionists had originated with the Whigs. It was an age of change, of progress, and of liberty, and many, the old people especially, thought they were being hurried down the slopes of reform to the depths of revolution. Mrs. Fitzherbert was one of these, and when the Duke of Wellington resigned office in November 1830, and Lord Grey formed an Administration pledged to Reform, she, in common with many others, thought that a revolution was at hand.

On the first of March 1831, the Bill for Parliamentary Reform was introduced into the House of Commons by Lord John Russell. It went much farther than had been anticipated. Its progress was accompanied by violent scenes within the walls of Parliament, by great public agitation without. It was the one subject of conversation everywhere, from the peasant's cottage to the King's palace. The King favoured a moderate measure of reform; the Queen and the Fitzclarences were strongly opposed to any, and said so on every possible occasion. Mrs. Fitzherbert also expressed herself freely in condemnation of the measure, so much so that paragraphs found their way

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into the press. The *Morning Post* writes, April 14, 1831: "The report that a certain illustrious lady has interfered in the arguments on the Reform question, and that in a style by no means subdued, proves at any rate that she will have a *Will* of her own." [1] It is curious to contrast Mrs. Fitzherbert's freedom of speech on the subject of Parliamentary Reform, which affected her not at all, with her previous reticence on Catholic Emancipation. The following letters to Mrs. Damer afford an index to her views: —

"TILNEY STREET, *May* 4, 1831.

"Public affairs are going on sadly. Nothing can be more provoking, but though many think we are on the eve of a Revolution, everything in the great world goes on as usual — balls, dinners, and Ascot races; this week I hear is to be very gay. As I sent excuses to all the great parties, I never saw the Duke of Orleans.[2] The day he went away he and his followers sent their cards here. I suppose Papa and Mamma desired him to call upon me, as he told the Smythes [3] his father said I was one of his oldest friends."

The second reading of the Reform Bill was carried by a majority of one, but the Government, having been twice defeated in committee, resolved to appeal to the country, and asked the King to dissolve Parliament. The Tories were of opinion that the King should do nothing of the kind, but send for the Duke of Wellington. However, the King determined to follow Lord Grey's advice, and he took the unusual step of going down to the House of Lords to dissolve Parliament himself. On going and returning he received a great ovation; the crowd greeted him with cries of "Bravo, old Boy!" "Three Cheers for the King and Reform." The city was illuminated and the country blazed with bonfires. The Queen, who was regarded as the heart and soul of the Court faction opposed to Reform, was extremely unpopular. One evening, when she was returning from a concert, she met with a very hostile re-

[1] This paragraph was also copied into the Brighton papers.

[2] The Duke of Orleans (1810–42) was the eldest son of King Louis Philippe and Queen Amélie, and father of the late Comte de Paris.

[3] Mrs. Walter Smythe, sister-in-law of Mrs. Fitzherbert (then a widow), and her two daughters.

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ception from the mob, who hooted her all the way to St. James's. The mob then proceeded to Apsley House, the Duke of Wellington's, where they smashed every pane of glass in the windows.

The General Election throughout the country was attended with great excitement. The people demanded "The Bill, the whole Bill, and nothing but the Bill," and the candidates who pledged themselves to this, were nearly everywhere victorious at the polls. The new House of Commons, which assembled on June 14, 1831, contained a large majority of members pledged to Reform. The Bill was again introduced by Lord John Russell, and popular excitement was wrought to the highest pitch.

Mrs. Fitzherbert to the Hon. Mrs. Dawson Damer.

"TILNEY STREET, *August* 21, 1831.

"The town is quiet, but at the smallest signal from Lord Grey is ready to rise. We are in a sad state. God knows what is to happen. Munster tells me he writes to you every other day what passes — he is violently unhappy, and really has a great reason to be so. His father [William IV.] is in great good spirits; he does everything Lord Grey wishes, and I am sorry to say is only occupied with dinners and balls. It is quite melancholy! Tallyrand [1] appears much more active than our people. Tallyrand is certainly the cleverest person in existence. He is aware of the people he has to deal with, and does whatever he likes. The common people say he goes every night at twelve o'clock into the Regent's Park to have private conversation with the Devil."

During a truce in the turmoil over the Reform Bill, William IV. was crowned. The King was indifferent about the Coronation; he had already put the crown on his head when he dissolved Parliament, saying, "Nobody shall crown me but myself." But the Duke of Wellington and the Duke of Cumberland raised the question in the House of Lords, and said that it was a matter of grave constitutional moment. The King therefore yielded, and the Coronation took place at Westminster

[1] Prince Talleyrand, the French Ambassador. The *Morning Post* said of him, "Talleyrand is certainly the most extraordinary being of his kind the world has produced since the creation."

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Abbey on September 8, 1831, but shorn of many circumstances of splendour; the dissatisfied spoke of it as a "half-crownation." Mrs. Fitzherbert was in London, but, in accordance with her rule of attending no official ceremonies, she did not attend the Coronation. Lord Munster wrote an amusing account of the ceremony for her edification, from which we quote the following: —

The Earl of Munster to Mrs. Fitzherbert.

"*September* 9, 1831.

"Thank heaven, the Coronation is over! I only arrived in town on Monday, and found the Palace and its inmates in a glorious bustle. But for the rain, a most ridiculous rehearsal had been ordered for Wednesday. The wall separating the King's mews from Buckingham House garden was pulled down, and the King was to stand in the garden, and see all the coaches and horses and footmen in their state liveries go through this absurd and childish rehearsal! Fortunately, it rained; for they tell me, if the State coach, which weighs seven tons, had once got on the wet turf or gravel, it would have so sunk that no power under an eighty-horse-power steamer could have drawn it back to the stable. The King, however, went over to the Abbey to see the *locale*, and in so doing caught a cold, which showed itself in a swelled face. As it was his left cheek, no doubt it was ordered providentially, so that he could offer a larger surface to his liege Lords when they did their homage.[1]

"All London was on the move at six o'clock, and the arrangements for arriving at the Abbey were excellent, and no trouble or difficulty arose throughout the day. I did not leave my house till half-past nine, trusting to my crimson and gold liveries, which looked magnificent, to make all barriers fly open before me.

"The arrangements in the Abbey were the same as at the last Coronation, only there was a second chair for the Queen, on a stage a step lower than the King's. About 150 peers and 70 to 80 peeresses were present. The seats of the latter looked very well, like a parterre of tulips — only the Duchess of St.

[1] The King strongly objected to being kissed, especially by the Bishops, and ordered that part of the ceremony to be struck out, but the Bishops protested *en masse*, and he had to submit to the ordeal.

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WILLIAM IV.

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Albans in the front looked like a full-blown peony; the young Duchess of Richmond was next to her, making the contrast still more remarkable. Lady Clanricarde in front looked well, and was seated next to Lady Salisbury. All those peeresses who had received their coronets to make honest women of them were present, and it was amusing to see the virtuous ladies indignant at their neighbourhood. . . .

"When the peers did homage the Duke of Wellington was loudly and spontaneously cheered, which was all very well, as the great Captain of the Age, though contrary to etiquette. But the silly Whigs made it political by cheering Lord Grey, and then some fools cheered Brougham, and then it became ridiculous, from the attorneys' clerks and sheriffs' officers who had got smuggled into the galleries applauding the Law Lords!

"I had not embraced (I find that is the correct expression) the King since my birthday, when ten years old, on which occasion he told me that I was no longer a boy, and that he did not like kissing (I beg pardon) — men. He told me when I 'embraced' him in the Abbey that he was not at all tired. The sermon of the Bishop of London was good and impressive, and had the advantage of only lasting seventeen or eighteen minutes.

"The scramble for medals was highly indecorous, very like schoolboys quarrelling at chuck-farthing and fighting for ha'pence. I had left my cocked hat in the King's dressing-room, and giving my coronet and robes to one of his pages, I jumped on my horse and saw the whole procession on its return. It was a fine sight, but one coach-and-six is so like another coach-and-six that it is after all but a tame affair. Tens of thousands of loyal, *alias* Reforming, spectators — all very vehement, of course. Frederick,[1] who, I think foolishly, had charge of the procession (which formerly was done by the Head Constable of Westminster), had arranged it well, but in his anxiety to be as fine as possible was nearly killed. He had put a Persian bridle on his horse, so heavy with silver that it absolutely dropped off, and he went along Pall Mall and Charing Cross like Johnnie Gilpin, till fortunately he was stopped without an accident." [2]

[1] Lord Frederick Fitzclarence.

[2] This letter, found among Mrs. Fitzherbert's papers, is published here by kind permission of the present Earl of Munster.

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Mrs. Fitzherbert to the Hon. Mrs. Dawson Damer.

"TILNEY STREET, *September* 9, 1831.

"The Coronation by all accounts went off beautifully, and everybody seemed pleased. I saw nothing of the procession, for I had got cold at the Breakfast at Chiswick last week, though we fortunately had a beautiful day. The Duke [of Devonshire] was in higher force than ever I have seen him. A remarkably good dinner, the illuminations, fireworks, and the house and grounds beautifully lit up. By nine o'clock dancing began, and I felt rather tired and came away. There was dinner for a hundred guests, and the scene was altogether very gay. Since then I have been confined by another attack of influenza, and have not been able to leave my house. I have had three dinner invitations from the Palace, and have been obliged to send excuses. You will see the extraordinary [1] list of Peers. I understand there are to be fifteen more made to get a majority in the House of Lords. Several have refused accepting this dignity, and several that ought not to be peers, from birth or situation, are very anxious to be created. This is lowering the peerage sadly. You will read all the names in the papers. My friend the Landgravine [2] has gone to Homburg. Both she and the Duke of Cambridge left town in the afternoon."

Soon after the Coronation the public interest was again absorbed in the Reform Bill. The measure passed the House of Commons on September 22 by a large majority, and was sent up to the House of Lords, where it was fiercely debated for many nights. The struggle reached its climax in the early hours of the morning of October 8, 1831, when, after an all-night debate, the Bill was thrown out by forty-one votes. The action of the House of Lords was followed by riots and disturbances in London, and throughout the country. The King, who was alarmed at the growth of the democratic spirit, suggested that the Bill should be remodelled, but the Government was determined to carry it as it stood, and this change in the

[1] The Coronation peers, created on the nomination of Lord Grey, were Whigs, and pledged to vote for the Reform Bill in the Upper House.

[2] Princess Elizabeth, daughter of George III., who married in 1818 the Landgrave of Hesse-Homburg. She died in 1840.

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King's views led the Ministers to seek a reason for it, which they found in the royal household. The Queen's hostility to Reform was notorious, and she, it was said, was influenced by her chamberlain, Lord Howe, whom the King had already rebuked for "chattering about the Reform Bill." Lord Grey therefore requested the dismissal of Lord Howe. The King agreed, but the Queen was highly indignant, and refused to appoint a successor to her chamberlain. Lord Howe, though he had to resign officially, determined, with the Queen's permission, to continue in office unofficially. This unwise action gave rise to many false and absurd rumours. *The Times*, though it did not repeat the worst of these, spoke of the "domestic importunity" to which the King was subjected, in order to turn him from his political views, and it reminded the Queen that "a foreigner was no very competent judge of English liberties, and that politics were not the proper field for *female* enterprise or exertion."

Mrs. Fitzherbert, who had also received a hint from an exalted Personage not to "chatter so much about the Reform Bill," had now perforce to keep silence, and could only relieve her feelings on paper. We quote the following from her letters to Mrs. Damer through the autumn: —

"Tilney Street, *October* 18, 1831.

"I should have written before, but really I have been *so* much worried and alarmed by all the riots, that have been going on here for three days (since the Lords threw out the Bill), that I could settle to nothing. The alarm everybody is in at what may happen is sadly increased by the accounts from different parts of the country. It is so similar to what passed in France that it is really quite *frightful*.[1] Your friend Lady Georgiana [Bathurst] is for setting off for China, and I believe if it was not the sea voyage I should like to go there too, or *anywhere*, to have peace and quiet. The newspapers will inform you better than I can do on the state of politics. Nothing will move the Ministers, and no one wishes to be put in their place. I trust that, as they have been the cause of all these

[1] At Nottingham the Castle was burnt by the mob; at Derby the jail was forced open; at Bristol the riots lasted for several days, and many public buildings were burned. Ireland was also in a very disturbed state.

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disagreeable and frightful occurrences, they will endeavour to put an end to them; but I fear it has gone too far for us to expect much good. *The People* are now our Sovereign, Ministers, &c., and their demands seem to be the order of the day. . . . I dined yesterday at the Palace, and am to meet the Grand Duchess [1] there on Thursday; she is going to Petersburg in a few days. There is great distress amongst them all at Court at Lord Grey's having insisted on turning out Lord Howe.[2] He was a great favourite with every one, and the conduct is looked upon as very harsh and tyrannical, and it will never be forgotten, particularly as the King made a point of not having the Queen's household disturbed, saying that Ministers might do what they pleased with *his* establishment, which he is forced to alter every day."

"TILNEY STREET, *October* 26, 1831.

"I wrote to you before about Lord Howe having been turned out of his place. The Ministers, I believe, are sorry now for what they have done, having brought a host of enemies upon themselves. The manner in which it was done was most insulting and ungentleman-like, and will never be forgotten or forgiven. The Queen has always received the Ministers with every mark of kindness and attention. She feels herself, and with good reason, uncommonly insulted and ill-treated, and though she is obliged to receive them, she now takes no notice of them, and will not speak to any of *the set*. It is very unfortunate, for besides ill-treating her, it is exposing the King to annoyance, who is made most uncomfortable; in short it has set the whole family in an uproar. God knows how it is all to end! The King is so entirely at Lord Grey's orders that he has no will of his own.

"I met the whole of the Grey family at the Palace the other day, and they were particularly civil to me. I was rather disappointed with the Grand Duchess, I had heard so much of her beauty; she is certainly pretty and pleasant, and covered with the finest diamonds I ever saw, far superior to our Queen's."

[1] The Grand Duchess Helena of Russia.

[2] Richard William Pend Curzon Howe, first Earl Howe, was chamberlain to the Queen, and was supposed to influence her in her opposition to the Reform Bill. He was forced to resign office by the Government.

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"TILNEY STREET, *November* 3, 1831.

"Everything is going on so wretchedly here in London that I cannot make up my mind what to do, and at Brighton it is worse. Much as I like Brighton, I feel uncomfortable with respect to the Royalties. That happy family at the Pavilion last year are very different now to what they were then. I shall take a hint from what Lord Glengall tells me and, instead of talking, *put a seal on my lips* and keep all my thoughts to myself. I am engaged to dine there every Sunday during their stay at Brighton, which they told me was not to prevent my dining there the other days of the week. They are all very kind to me, and I feel very grateful, but you know *what it generally is*. There is a terrible squabble going on between Lords Howe and Erroll,[1] and the whole family are in a sad state of confusion and quarrel. The history is too long for a letter, and I daresay you will hear of it in Paris. The horrid Radicals in Brighton would not allow fireworks or illuminations for the King's arrival, which has always been done. Between you and me, I shall remain here a little longer, and see what is to happen at Brighton. I am grieved beyond words at the place; being one of the oldest inhabitants, I cannot bear to see it in the state it is in now."

"BRIGHTON, *November* 21, 1831.[2]

"The King has no will or power of his own. Lord Grey governs everything. I confess I am of Munster's opinion, that an evil hour is near approaching. I think a revolution is very soon at hand, if not already begun.[3] . . . The Queen has been very ill, and has been confined to her room for the last fortnight. To-day she dines with us for the first time. I dined yesterday at the Pavilion, forty in number. Lord Brougham[4] was one of the party, so what you have heard about the King's not being allowed to give dinners is not true. The King is ordered up to

[1] William George, seventeenth Earl of Erroll. He had married, 1820, Lady Elizabeth Fitzclarence, daughter of William IV.

[2] Mrs. Fitzherbert went to Brighton on November 19.

[3] She was not alone in this opinion. The Duke of Wellington and other Tory leaders expressed similar views. The Queen was convinced that a revolution was imminent, and even the King wrote to Lord Grey, "*The times are awful.*"

[4] Henry, first Lord Brougham, then Lord Chancellor. He conducted the defence of Queen Caroline. His views on the subject of Mrs. Fitzherbert's marriage to George IV. have already been explained.

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London to-morrow to arrange something the Ministers want him to do."

Mrs. Fitzherbert spent Christmas and the New Year at Brighton; the Damers and the Jerninghams came to stay with her, and she dined frequently at the Pavilion, but she gave no parties this year; in truth there was very little entertaining anywhere. The country was still in a most disturbed state, and to add to the general misery and confusion, England was visited for the first time by the Asiatic cholera. The Whig Government held its own, and in March 1832 the Reform Bill again passed through the House of Commons. The Lords now showed a disposition to yield, but they hoped to mutilate the Bill in committee. Lord Grey was determined that the Bill should not be seriously altered, and he proposed that the King should create a sufficient number of peers to insure its passing the House of Lords. The King demurred to this drastic measure, and through a court intrigue the Ministers offered their resignations, which were accepted by the King, who sent for the Duke of Wellington.

Mrs. Fitzherbert to the Hon. Mrs. Dawson Damer, Paris.

"TILNEY STREET, *May* 11, 1832.

"The King has refused to make more peers. Everybody is going down to the Commons to see what is to be done. The Master of the Rolls says all is over, but I still have hopes. The Grey party say they cannot form an Administration; the Opposition must come in. If this is the case I hope Peel will come in, but I doubt whether the Duke will accept.[1] I hope the King will be staunch about the peerage. Lord Grey says that he must have peers, or a paper signed that the Opposition will not go against the Bill. God knows what will be done, but from what I have heard the Opposition are annoyed at the resignation of the Ministry, none of them wishing to replace them in the state the country has been put into. No one has yet been appointed, but members are named. The confusion

[1] Her forecast was quite wrong. The Duke made the attempt to form an Administration, but Peel refused to have anything to do with it.

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is very great, particularly as cards of invitation from the Ministers for the great dinners on the Birthday were issued, which must now be put aside. The Duke of Wellington's ball is to take place. Very properly, he invited all the Ministers and their wives to meet the King, a very comical proceeding under the circumstances."

"TILNEY STREET, *May* 15, 1832.

"I wish this odious Reform Bill was over one way or another. Everybody is worn out with it. After having sent three excuses to the Palace, not being very well, I felt bound not to send a fourth, and I dined there on Sunday, and really had a very pleasant party. The King was in great force, and all the rest in high good-humour; many inquiries after 'Minney,' for none of them call you by any other name. . . . God bless you, Dearest; tell the dear children that I am delighted at their praying for me. I am sure it will do me good."

The King was compelled to yield to circumstances. The Duke of Wellington and Lord Lyndhurst tried in vain to form an Administration. The King then recalled Lord Grey, and agreed to create the number of peers necessary to carry the Bill, calling first up to the House of Lords peers' eldest sons. This extreme measure, however, proved unnecessary, for the Duke of Wellington and about a hundred Tory peers absented themselves under protest. The Reform Bill was carried through the House of Lords, and received the royal assent June 1, 1832. Its passing into law may be regarded as coincident with the passing of the Georgian Era.

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CHAPTER XXXI

THE BURNING OF THE LETTERS

(1833)

EARLY in 1833 the Duke of Wellington revived the question of the correspondence between George IV. and Mrs. Fitzherbert, which had lain in abeyance since the settlement of her annuity after the late King's death. The Duke had not pressed the matter at the time, because of the evident reluctance of Mrs. Fitzherbert to enter into any discussion on the subject, and the desire of William IV. to meet her wishes in this as in all things. Soon after followed the Duke's resignation of office, and then came the agitation over the Reform Bill, which had absorbed the Duke's energies for the last two years. Now, however, that the Reform Bill had passed into law, and the Whigs had a majority in Parliament so overwhelming that it seemed likely the Tories would be out of power for a generation, the Duke had leisure to turn his attention to other affairs, and the first matter to claim his attention was the disposition of these papers. As executor of the late King he had a great number of Mrs. Fitzherbert's letters to George IV.; he knew she had preserved the late King's letters, and that she also had many other documents of an important nature; he felt that a settlement of the matter should no longer be delayed. Mrs. Fitzherbert was now in her seventy-seventh year, and through the winter of 1832–33 her health had been failing; she might die at any moment, no one quite knew to whom she would leave her property, and these important and secret papers might fall into the hands of persons who would make indiscreet use of them. After the late King's death she had asked that her letters to him should be returned to her; she feared that some of them had fallen into the hands of Sir William Knighton. The Duke on his side said he could not give them up to her unless she was prepared to hand over all the documents in her possession which

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related to George IV. Mrs. Fitzherbert demurred, on the ground that she wished to retain such papers as she deemed necessary for the vindication of her honour at some future time, and so the matter dropped.

The Duke now revived it; he had a talk with Mrs. Dawson Damer on the subject, whom he met frequently in London. He told her he had a proposal to make to Mrs. Fitzherbert concerning these papers, and asked her to find out when it would be agreeable for Mrs. Fitzherbert to discuss the matter with him. Mrs. Dawson Damer wrote to Mrs. Fitzherbert, who was then at Brighton, and told her what the Duke said. In reply Mrs. Fitzherbert wrote: —

"BRIGHTON, *March* 3, 1833.

"Many thanks, dear Minney, for your letter this morning. The account you give of your conversation with the Duke of Wellington makes me rather nervous, and I should really feel more obliged to you than I can express if you would desire him not to send me the papers he alludes to. I had rather defer their perusal till I go to town, which I shall do very soon. Pray express my thanks to him; he has always upon this subject shown much feeling and good nature to me. I am not very well, and anything upon *the* subject always annoys me very much."

On March 14, Mrs. Fitzherbert came up to London from Brighton. She then saw the Duke, and without pledging herself to any definite proposal, she agreed to appoint trustees who would act for her in the matter. She stipulated also that, before she could do anything in the business, the Duke on his part must promise that all her letters to George IV. should be given up, and that Knighton should not be allowed to retain any one of them. The Duke assured her that this should be done. She also reiterated her determination to retain such documents as she deemed necessary to prove the fact of her marriage. To this the Duke agreed conditionally. After some deliberation Mrs. Fitzherbert then asked Lord Albemarle [1] and Lord Stourton [2] to act for her in this matter, and they expressed

[1] The fourth Earl of Albemarle (1772–1849). He had married a daughter of Mrs. Fitzherbert's great friend, Lady de Clifford.

[2] The seventeenth Lord Stourton, whose mother (*née* the Hon. Mary Langdale) was Mrs. Fitzherbert's first cousin.

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themselves willing. Lord Albemarle was an old and trusted friend, and Lord Stourton was her second cousin, a Roman Catholic, and thus allied to her by ties of blood and religion. To Lord Albemarle she left the negotiation of the business with the Duke of Wellington. These negotiations took some time, Mrs. Fitzherbert went down to Brighton for Easter, came back to London in May, and remained there until everything was settled. The chief difficulty arose over the papers which Mrs. Fitzherbert wished to keep. The Duke of Wellington would have preferred that everything should be destroyed, but Mrs. Fitzherbert was determined that these should be preserved. Appeal was made to William IV., who overruled the Duke, and in the end a compromise was arrived at. Mrs. Fitzherbert was to preserve such papers as she deemed necessary to prove her marriage and guard her interests, but these papers were to be placed in the safe custody of Coutts's Bank under certain conditions; what these conditions were the following will show:—

The Earl of Albemarle to Lord Stourton.

"THE STUD HOUSE, *August* 10, 1833.

"DEAR LORD STOURTON, —I have much pleasure in informing you, that our business is drawing towards a satisfactory termination. After two interviews with the Duke of Wellington, we have agreed, subject to your approbation, to the proposed terms, which I direct to you under another cover. Mrs. Fitzherbert is, I believe, *perfectly* satisfied. I have had the honour of submitting to the King a full statement of the whole case, and his Majesty gives his cordial sanction to the proposed arrangement. It, however, waits for your approval; and should anything occur to you as neglected, or incautiously guarded, have the goodness to let me know. The Duke of Wellington takes it upon his own responsibility that Sir William Knighton shall retain no papers whatever, and the word *knowledge* in the proposal does not mean any restraint over our disposition of the papers retained, but merely that the other party shall not be taken by surprise by our publication of them without notice. I think it a word useless to be inserted, but of no consequence.

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"I have been commanded by the King to invite Mrs. Fitzherbert to dine with him on Saturday, the 24th, and also your Lordship, to meet her on that day, should it happen you are in London. Believe me, dear Lord Stourton, sincerely yours,

"ALBEMARLE.

"Correct Copy. — STOURTON."

[*Inclosure.*]

"It is agreed by Mrs. Fitzherbert on the one part, and the executors of the late King on the other, that each will destroy all papers and documents (with the exception of those hereafter mentioned) in the possession of either, signed or written by Mrs. Fitzherbert, or by her directions, or signed or written by the late King, when Prince of Wales, or King of Great Britain, &c., or by his command. The two parties agree, that in any case any papers signed or written by either of the parties above mentioned, or by the authority of either, shall ever hereafter be found among the papers of the other, they shall be given up as the property of the writer or signer thereof, or of the person who authorised the writing or signature thereof. Such papers and documents as Mrs. Fitzherbert shall wish to keep, shall be sealed up in a cover under the seals of the Duke of Wellington and Sir William Knighton, and of the Earl of Albemarle and Lord Stourton, and be lodged in the bank of Messrs. Coutts, at the disposition of the Earl of Albemarle and of Lord Stourton. The seals not to be broken without the knowledge of the Duke of Wellington and Sir William Knighton. It is understood that no copy of any paper or document is to be taken or kept on either side."

Here follows a list of the papers and documents retained by Mrs. Fitzherbert: —

1. The Mortgage on the Palace at Brighton.
2. The Certificate of the Marriage, dated December 21 (*sic*), 1785.
3. Letter from the late King, relating to the Marriage, signed (George IV.).
4. Will written by the late King (George IV.).

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5. Memorandum written by Mrs. Fitzherbert, attached to a letter written by the clergyman who performed the Marriage Ceremony.

Correct copy. — STOURTON.

An exact copy. Witness my hand,
STOURTON.[1]

Lord Stourton to the Earl of Albemarle.

"I entirely concur in the proposal transmitted to me by the Earl of Albemarle, and give my sanction to any mode that Mrs. Fitzherbert and Lord Albemarle may deem expedient for carrying it into effect. I will affix my seal to the parcel containing the reserved documents on my return to town, and I now authorise the Earl of Albemarle, with the concurrence of Mrs. Fitzherbert, to destroy the rest. I would only observe, that 'the *knowledge*' of the Duke of Wellington and Sir William Knighton, Bart., is not understood to make them of necessity *consenting parties* to the inspection of the reserved papers to be deposited at Coutts's Banking-house. . . ." [2]

On August 24, 1833, the Duke of Wellington and Lord Albemarle met by appointment in the drawing-room of Mrs. Fitzherbert's house in Tilney Street.[3] The Duke brought with him all Mrs. Fitzherbert's letters to George IV., and she on her side produced all the late King's letters to her, with the exception of the papers which it had been agreed that she should preserve. She had written a list of them (the list already specified), and had made them up in a closed packet, to which the Duke of Wellington and Lord Albemarle then affixed their signatures and seals. Mrs. Fitzherbert went through the papers brought by the Duke, and satisfied herself that all her letters to the King were among them, especially those which she feared had fallen into the hands of Sir William Knighton. She then retired, and left the work of the burning of the papers to be carried out by the Duke of Wellington and Lord Albemarle. This took a long time.

[1] Langdale's "Memoirs," pp. 84–87. [2] Langdale's "Memoirs," p. 88.
[3] Lord Stourton was ill in the country and could not attend. Sir William Knighton, Mrs. Fitzherbert declined to meet.

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The sixth Earl of Albemarle writes in his memoirs: "Some idea of the mass of manuscripts committed to the flames may be formed by an expression of the Duke to my father after several hours' burning: 'I think, my Lord, we had better hold our hand for a while, or we shall set the old woman's chimney on fire." [1] The chimney *was* nearly set on fire, and a smoke stain on the white marble mantel-piece, which may still be seen in the drawing-room of the house in Tilney Street, is said to have been caused by the conflagration. Mrs. Fitzherbert afterwards told Mrs. Damer that "the room smelt of burnt paper and sealing-wax for weeks afterwards."

Directly the burning was over, the same day, Lord Albemarle went down to Coutts's Bank and deposited the packet. He writes the next day to Lord Stourton: —

The Earl of Albemarle to Lord Stourton.

"THE STUD HOUSE [HAMPTON COURT],
August 25 [1833].

"DEAR LORD STOURTON, — The difficulty of finding the Duke of Wellington unengaged, and that alone, has caused the delay.

"I am happy in being able to inform you, that the business is now completely arranged, and, I believe I may add, to the satisfaction of all parties. Yesterday, the Duke of Wellington, Mrs. Fitzherbert, and myself, were busily engaged in burning all the letters on either side, with the exception of those which Mrs. Fitzherbert chose to keep. It would be unjust to the Duke of Wellington, if I did not say that his conduct was gentlemanly and friendly to Mrs. Fitzherbert in every respect, and I know that she is perfectly satisfied.

"After our great work of burning was over, I went to Messrs. Coutts's, and delivered into Mr. Dickie's [2] hands (by Mrs. Fitzherbert's desire) the parcel containing the documents and letters reserved, signed and sealed by the Duke of Wellington and myself. Whenever your Lordship returns to London you will have the goodness to add your name and seal.

[1] "Fifty Years of my Life," by George Thomas, Earl of Albemarle. London, 1876.

[2] Mr. Dickie was the clerk who for years superintended George IV.'s banking account. No doubt he performed a similar office for Mrs. Fitzherbert.

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"It is satisfactory to me to add, that amongst the papers brought and destroyed by the Duke of Wellington, were the letters which Mrs. Fitzherbert had missed, and which she supposed to have been obtained by Sir William Knighton, and kept by him. I believe the letters were of no consequence, but I clearly saw that this circumstance was an additional relief to Mrs. Fitzherbert's mind. I am sure we both cordially agree in the hope, and I trust I may add in the confidence, that her anxiety on this most delicate subject may now be entirely set at rest. She expresses most feelingly her gratitude to your Lordship for your useful and zealous assistance. Believe me, dear Lord Stourton, sincerely yours, "ALBEMARLE."

In reply Lord Stourton wrote: —

"I think Mrs. Fitzherbert retains everything essential to the protection of her character and property, and it must be a solid consolation that his Majesty has been graciously pleased to interest himself in and to sanction an arrangement which, while it protects the parties, shelters them from unnecessary publicity." [1]

So the matter rested. Mrs. Fitzherbert had placed these documents in safe keeping for a specific purpose, namely the vindication of her character at some future time. When and how that was to be accomplished she had not yet determined, but she had reserved the right to withdraw her papers from Coutts's Bank when she should think fit. It was a great relief to her mind that the matter was so far settled, for the agitation and anxiety occasioned by the controversy over her papers had made her very unwell; she broke down completely, and for nearly five weeks was unable to leave her room. She wrote to Lord Stourton excusing herself from seeing him on that account, and added: —

"I long to talk it [the matter of the papers] over with you whenever it pleases God that I may again have the happiness of seeing you. My medical advisers tell me that the best chance I have is to go into another climate, and I propose setting out in a day or two for Aix-la-Chapelle. My mind being more at ease, I trust I may enjoy a little better health

[1] Langdale's "Memoirs," pp. 89–90.

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than I have done. I cannot expect at my time of life to be free of all ailments, and I must submit, and be thankful for the many kind friends I have met with, who support me in all my difficulties. To none do I feel more indebted than to yourself." [1]

Mrs. Fitzherbert went to Aix-la-Chapelle in October, and the waters did her so much good that she determined to return there in the spring. Her affairs were now settled, and she had nothing to call her back to England, so she arranged to winter in Paris. She lent her house at Brighton to her friend, Lady Downshire, and she took an apartment in Paris near the Damers, who were then residing there. At that time there was a considerable English element in fashionable Parisian society, and several English noble families went there every year for a lengthy sojourn. This was partly due to the English tastes of King Louis Philippe. Mrs. Fitzherbert had many friends in Paris, both French and English, and her stay there was made pleasant for her by the King and Queen. She writes: —

Mrs. Fitzherbert to Lord Stourton.

"PARIS, *December* 7, 1833.

". . . I have taken a very quiet apartment, and live very retired, seeing occasionally some friends. The Duke of Orleans came to see me the moment I arrived, with a thousand kind messages from the King and Queen, desiring me to go to them, which I accordingly have done. Nothing could exceed the kindness of their reception of me: they are both old acquaintances of mine. I have declined all their *fêtes*, and they have given me a general invitation to go there every evening whenever I like it, in a quiet family way, which suits me very much. I really think I never saw a more amiable family: so happy and so united. The King seems worn to death with business all day and all night; but he assured me that things were going on much better, though there were a great many wicked people trying to make mischief. I told him that I was afraid he had sent many of them to make disturbances in our country.[2] He

[1] Mrs. Fitzherbert to Lord Stourton; undated [end of September 1833]. Langdale's "Memoirs," p. 107.

[2] Some of the French *emigrés* who came to England at this time were very undesirable, and the Alien Act had to be put into force.

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is very much attached to England, and hopes we shall always be friends." [1]

Mrs. Fitzherbert was not forgotten by her friends in England while she was abroad, as the following letter will show: —

H.R.H. the Princess Augusta [2] *to Mrs. Fitzherbert.*

"BRIGHTON, *January* 1, 1834.

"It was but yesterday, my dearest Mrs. Fitzherbert, that I was talking of you, and saying how truly sorry I was that you were not here; and this morning I had the great pleasure of receiving your most kind letter.

"It was a *pleasure indeed*, and I thank God you have given me so good an account of your health. I shall be reconciled to your being so far away, and for so long, if it is for your good; otherwise we all lament your absence at this house [the Pavilion]. . . . Travelling must be very dangerous, particularly as the changes in the weather are so extraordinary. I am rejoiced to be able to give you very favourable reports of dearest William's and the Queen's health. They are both very much obliged to you for your kind message, and beg you to be assured of their sincere regard and affection for your *excellent self*. I have been confined to the house for some time by a very bad cold. Sir Henry Halford was here at the time I was at the worst, but I hope in a few days to get out. Brighton is just now very gay with Christmas entertainments and balls, but I have seen nothing of that sort. My sister Mary [3] and the King have been with me to-day after their drive. Lady Downshire's [4] family are very comfortable settled in your house; poor Lord [illegible] is dreadfully altered in looks, but I think better in health than last year. The sons are all about now, which is company and great help to her.

"Aceept my kindest wishes for your health, and that you

[1] Mrs. Fitzherbert to Lord Stourton. Langdale's "Memoirs," pp. 109, 110.

[2] The Princess Augusta Sophia, daughter of George III. (1768–1840). This Princess never married.

[3] H.R.H. the Princess Mary, daughter of George III., married 1816 her cousin, William Frederick, Duke of Gloucester. She died 1857.

[4] Maria, daughter of the first Earl of Plymouth, married 1811 Arthur, third Marquess of Downshire. She had three sons and three daughters. The Downshires were great friends of Mrs. Fitzherbert.

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WILLIAM IV. ATTENDING DIVINE SERVICE IN THE CHAPEL ROYAL, BRIGHTON

The other Royal Personages present are Queen Adelaide, Princess Augusta, and Prince George of Cambridge

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may return to England in the Spring, when none of your friends will be happier to see you than, my dearest Mrs. Fitzherbert, your very sincere and attached friend, "AUGUSTA."

While Mrs. Fitzherbert was in Paris she became much interested in a Mademoiselle Nisot, a young French lady of good family, but very poor, who supported herself by giving singing lessons. Mrs. Fitzherbert was anxious to help her, but she did not know how to do so without wounding her *amour propre*. So we find this old lady of seventy-eight proposing that she should take singing lessons from her *protegée*. The letter in which she proposes this shows her impulsive kindness of heart, and her delicate consideration for the feelings of the young girl whom she wishes to aid.

Mrs. Fitzherbert to Mademoiselle Nisot.[1]

"PARIS, *May*—, 1834.

"DEAR MADEMOISELLE, — I hope you got home safely, and that your cold is no worse. Though slight, it has troubled *me* because of the trouble it causes *you*. Do not wonder when I tell you my anxiety arises from the interest I take in you. Perhaps you will think me very *bold* (*bien hardie*) to tell you this so soon, perhaps you will disbelieve me, but there is a charm about you I cannot define, and it interests me in you not as an acquaintance of a few days only, but as one whom I have known and liked for a long time. You will say, or you will *think*, that it is my character to be like this, but you will be mistaken. I am, on the contrary, very slow in attaching myself to people, and I have rarely met in life any one who arouses my sympathy as you do.

"I hope, therefore, on my return from the Waters [Aix-la-Chapelle] that I shall see you sometimes, when you can spare yourself from the society of those friends who have claims on your friendship. In any case I shall have the pleasure of seeing you, for I wish, *really*, to become *your pupil*, and I shall win

[1] This letter was lent me by Dr. Chepmell, sometime physician to the Empress Eugénie, who attended Mdlle. Nisot in her old age, and to whom she gave this letter. It is written in French, of which I give a translation. Mdlle. Nisot at one time gave singing lessons to the Empress Eugénie.

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your kindness to me, by the pains which I shall take to save you trouble. Perhaps you could arrange to fix a time a little later than nine o'clock in the morning, for though I wish to do everything to suit your convenience, I could not promise often to take a lesson at that hour. Though I appear to be in perfect health, I am, alas! often, and even *very* often, a great sufferer. At such times I sleep very badly; sometimes it is only towards six o'clock in the morning that I fall asleep for two or three hours, and it is a fixed rule that I am not to be awakened until I ring, or, to express myself more clearly, it is by my doctors' orders, because otherwise my nerves suffer.

"I am looking forward to *Le Pré aux Clercs*, and if my friend does not give me the same places in the *loge* as I had yesterday, I will take tickets, and so give myself the pleasure of enabling you to hear that divine opera as a little remembrance of me. I am sending you some currant-and-raspberry syrup to soothe your cough, and shall be only too happy if I can *cure* it. In return I remind you of your promise to let me hear your sweet voice when you are well again.

"Believe me to remain, with kindest regards, yours,

"M. FITZHERBERT."

A further interesting reminiscence of Mrs. Fitzherbert's sojourn in Paris has been told me by the Dowager Countess Manvers, who now resides at No. 6 Tilney Street — Mrs. Fitzherbert's old house. Lady Manvers told me recently: "I remember seeing Mrs. Fitzherbert in Paris in the thirties. She came to call on my mother, the Duchesse de Coligny, to whom she talked much about the Orleans princes and princesses, whom they both knew very well. I remember her as being a very pretty old lady, with a bright, animated manner. She shook hands with me and I made my *révérence*. I don't remember any more than that, for in those days children were sent out of the room by their elders."

Mrs. Fitzherbert stayed in Paris until June, and then made another visit to Aix-la-Chapelle. She again derived great benefit from the waters, and wrote that she was "wonderfully better." She determined to go to Spa and then to Brussels before returning to Paris.

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Mrs. Fitzherbert to the Hon. Mrs. Dawson Damer.

"SPA, *August* 12, 1834.

"I left Aix on the 4th and arrived safely here. I find this place in every respect so much better that I should not have known it again had I not been told it was Spa. I was delighted to quit Aix; the violent heat and stench of the town were dreadful, besides tremendous storms of thunder and lightning which we had every day. The air of this place to me is quite refreshing, and I mean to stay till the end of the week and then proceed to Brussels for a few days. I am at the Hôtel de Flandres, very good, and if George were here, even *he* would not be able to find fault with the living. It is much better than any I have had since I left the Hôtel Bristol.

"*P.S.* — August 12. A melancholy and memorable recollection." [1]

"AIX-LA-CHAPELLE, *August* 22, 1834.

"You will be surprised, my dear Minney, to receive a letter from me at this place, but I have returned here to take a few more draughts of the water. I meant to proceed from Spa to Brussels, but was overcome by the intense heat of the weather, and for three or four days not able to move, so that it took away all the advantages received during my stay here. I saw Dr. Newbolt, whom you must remember last autumn at Brussels, and who is a sensible person; he desired me to return again here, and hoped that a week or ten days would restore me, and remove the debility the heat of the weather had occasioned. I have followed his advice with great reluctance, but I really was not able to proceed on my journey, and as I was near Aix I thought I had better agree to his proposal. I am drinking away as fast as I can, but I have not attempted bathing, which certainly did not agree with me, but the waters have, and I hope now will have their usual good effect upon me, for really when I went to Spa I was wonderfully well. I was so surprised the other evening, when my door opened, to see George's brother[2] make his appearance. I really thought at first it was himself, they are so much alike. He dined with

[1] George IV.'s birthday.

[2] This must have been the Hon. Lionel Charles Dawson, fourth son of the first Earl of Portarlington, younger brother of Colonel Dawson Damer.

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me; he is gone with a party into the country to-day, but returns to-morrow, when I hope he will eat his soup with me.

"I could not get the house I had before, it was engaged, and Dremel has behaved so ill to me I would not return to him. When we meet I will tell you all about it. I am in a very good lodging opposite the Rédout — very civil people, and I am very comfortable, but I hate this place so much that nothing but absolute necessity should have brought me here again. . . . I wish I could make myself some years younger and my health better; I should then have much pleasure in joining you anywhere you and George might propose, but alas! *mes beaux jours sont passés*, and I must make up my mind to my armchair and my fireside. I am not fit for anything else."

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CHAPTER XXXII

REST

(1834–1837)

MRS FITZHERBERT returned to England in September, after nearly a year's absence. She went from Aix-la-Chapelle to Paris, and after staying there a few days travelled by way of Calais-Dover to London — a long and fatiguing journey for an old lady of seventy-eight, when we remember at that time railways were unknown. But she seemed none the worse for it, for she writes: —

To Colonel the Hon. George Dawson Damer, Versailles.

"TILNEY STREET, *September* 30, 1834.

"Many thanks, my dear George, for your letter, which I received two days ago. I have suffered so much from the climate since I came here ten days since that it makes me quite ill; the constant damp and fogs annoy me beyond anything; it is impossible to see even the Park wall out of my windows, and I am quite suffocated. To-morrow I take my departure, and heartily glad shall I be to turn my back on the odious town. I am going for a few days to Brighton, and thence to the Bathursts,[1] and to the Cravens,[2] who are quite established at Brambridge. London is empty, and the few people I have seen are all in a fright at the state of affairs. I don't wonder at it, for I fear this country is in a sad state. The King came to town two days after my arrival, and sent to me to go to him,

[1] Sir Frederick Hervey Bathurst, Bart., had married Mrs. Fitzherbert's niece, Louisa Mary, elder daughter of the late Mr. Walter Smythe,

[2] The Hon. George Augustus Craven had married Mrs. Fitzherbert's niece Charlotte Georgiana Harriott, younger daughter of the late Mr. Walter Smythe. They lived at Brambridge, Mrs. Fitzherbert's old home. Mr. Craven died in 1836.

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but it so happened I had neither carriages nor horses. Lord Albemarle was ordered to send one of his Majesty's carriages, and of course I went. Nothing could equal his kind, and I must say, affectionate reception of me, and after I had passed some time with him he said, 'I have had something made for you, but I did not want to send it to you whilst you remained on the Continent.' Then he produced a pair of very handsome diamond bracelets. The value was nothing to me, but the kind manner that accompanied it was very flattering. I have shown them to everybody as the first and only present he ever gave me.

"I wrote to Minney the day after I arrived here, to tell her what a fortunate voyage I had across the water. I enclose a note for dear little Blanche, for I have had so much to do, I have never had time to write to her, and I know, having sent a letter to little Minney,[1] I shall be in disgrace if I don't do the same to her. You will hear all that is going on here better from the English now at Paris than I can inform you. I will therefore bid you farewell, with a thousand kind loves to dear Minney. Ever affectionately yours, "M. F.-H."

Mrs. Fitzherbert went down to Brighton in October, where, except for a short visit which she paid to her niece Lady Bathurst, she remained until April 1835. She continued in good health throughout the winter. The only letter we find worth quoting during this period is one she wrote to Colonel Damer; it shows that her keen interest in politics was unabated. She enclosed a copy of Peel's famous address to the electors of Tamworth, in which he said, "I consider the Reform Bill to be a final and irrevocable settlement of a great constitutional question — a settlement which no friend to the peace and welfare of this country would attempt to disturb either by direct or insidious means." Mrs. Fitzherbert wrote, December 16, 1834: "I cannot resist sending you the enclosed, which in my humble opinion is one of the cleverest productions ever written. I hope you will be as much delighted with it as everybody here is. The Whigs are outrageous, and call Peel's address all hypocrisy."

In acknowledging its receipt, Colonel Damer wrote: "On

[1] The late Countess Fortescue.

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Monday night we were summoned to pay our court to the King and Queen (Louis XVIII. and Queen Amélie). They both asked most kindly after you, and expressed a wish to see you in the spring."

But Mrs. Fitzherbert did not go abroad again. She was at her house in Tilney Street during most of the London season (1835), when she gave dinner-parties to her friends; she no longer gave any other form of entertainment. Raikes writes of her: "She kept a very handsome establishment in Tilney Street and Brighton, where the best society was always seen, every one without formality evincing that *nuance* of respect which tacitly acknowledged her elevated position, while the service of plate and handsome dinners, and a numerous train of servants, all grown old in her service, gave the house at least a *seigneurial*, if not a royal appearance." [1]

The following note to Mrs. Fitzherbert from the Princess Augusta, interesting because of its mention of our late Queen, was written at this time: —

"*May* 23, 1833.

"My dear Mrs. Fitzherbert, — I shall be very glad to see you to-morrow, if you will be at the Palace at four o'clock. I cannot name an earlier hour, as I go to Kensington to see Victoria,[2] whose birthday it is, and at five the King and Queen dine with me, for the ball given to the children begins at eight. I am very sorry to hear you have been ill, and trust that the Brighton air will restore your health. Not one of your friends is more attached to you than your faithful "Augusta."

Mrs. Fitzherbert dined several times at St. James's with the King and Queen, who as usual showed her great kindness and attention. Lady Georgiana Grey, writing to Mrs. Damer, mentions meeting her at one of these dinners. She says, "Mrs. Fitzherbert was at St. James's last night, looking beautiful, and young as ever." Indeed, her good looks and vivacity were a source of general comment. Mrs. Damer, writing from Baden (April 23, 1835), said that she had met Count Charles de Morny, the French Minister. "He inquired very attentively

[1] Raikes' "Journal."

[2] The Princess Victoria, daughter of the Duke of Kent, born May 24, 1819.

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after you, dearest Mamma, and said that no one he met in England had made the impression of being *grande dame* half as much as yourself." Mr. Charles Weld Blundell says that his great-uncle, Mr. Charles Langdale, told him "that though she still showed in his day great beauty and charm, her wit and high spirits were her chief attractions, and often used to surround her with eager listeners at nearly eighty."

Mrs. Fitzherbert spent Christmas at Brighton as usual. She continued fairly well, but she was no longer able to bear much fatigue, consequently she made Brighton her headquarters throughout the year 1836, and only went to London on brief visits. Brighton, especially in the summer, suited her better than any other place, and she had a great many interests there in connection with her Church and her charities which she had not elsewhere. There are still living a few people at Brighton who remember her during these last years of her life, and who can recall her as she drove out in her carriage every afternoon, with her servants in the royal liveries. One who remembers her well [1] has told me the following reminiscence: —

"It was between the years 1832–36 that I used to do a little upholstery work for Mrs. Fitzherbert at Steine House. I was then a young man of twenty odd. During that time she was often not in good health, so that, though I was there many times, I never but once had any conversation with her. One morning she sent for me, and asked me to help her rearrange some silhouettes on the walls of her room. There were hundreds of them, representing her many friends, including, it is scarcely necessary to say, some of the most distinguished personages of the century, and many were signed. They covered the walls of her room. For some time I worked at them, Mrs. Fitzherbert telling me where to place them. Every now and then she interrupted the work to ask me some questions about myself, how I liked my calling, &c. She spoke in a low, sweet voice, and every word was very distinctly uttered. I remember that she was wearing a black silk dress, and a little

[1] Mr. William Saunders, now living at 3 Downs View, Culverdon Down, Tunbridge Wells, aged 94, whom I went to see on April 7, 1903, when he gave me the above interesting reminiscence. Mr. Saunders was perfectly hale and hearty, and was reading a book of Huxley's (without spectacles) the afternoon I called on him.

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shawl, but not widow's weeds. She was very pale, in fact her face was as colourless as wax, which made her bright, dark eyes seem all the brighter by contrast. Though old time, sorrow, and ill-treatment had written deep furrows on her face, still one could see the remains of a beautiful woman. She seemed happy, even cheerful, but except when her face was lit up with her sweet smile, she wore a look of settled sadness. After about an hour, I should think, she said, 'I feel tired, I must leave you to finish them by yourself,' and went away. This was the only time I saw her to speak to, though I often saw her driving, and I was often in the house again. I remember her drawing-room on the first floor. The furniture was old fashioned and very good, but some of it was threadbare. I remember especially an ottoman covered with needlework (done by Mrs. Fitzherbert herself, the maid said) some two feet long, a bunch of roses on a maroon-coloured ground. I have repaired furniture in her bedroom too, a large room, and two sides of the room were hung with silhouettes.

"Whenever I saw Mrs. Fitzherbert after that morning when she talked to me, she always greeted me with a sweet smile of recognition which made me feel very proud. I venerated her for the kind, though dignified, manner in which she could speak to a young working-man as well as to a prince. Her servants were devoted to her, and some of them were very old. Her carriage with its splendid horses, and scarlet-liveried servants, flashing along the Steine was a familiar sight to all Brighton when I was a young man. Mrs. Fitzherbert was very benevolent and charitable to Protestants and Catholics alike." [1]

[1] Though not strictly germane to the subject, I may quote here some further reminiscences of Mr. Saunders which he told at the same time. They are those of a man who has lived in five reigns. "I remember," he said, "the festivities in Brighton for the Coronation of George IV. in 1821. I remember the bonfires on the Level, and I ate some of the roast ox that was given away. The ox was roasted on the Level just beyond St. Peter's Church. George IV. was often at Brighton after that, but I never saw him till he left the Pavilion for the last time in 1827. I got a glimpse of him then through the windows of his coach. He looked like an old man, and weary, and he did not seem very stout; but I did not see very well, for the horses rushed by at full gallop.

"I remember William IV. quite well. I saw him enter Brighton for the first time after his accession, and afterwards I often saw him walking on the parade or driving. I remember he had rather coarse features, with a heavy jowl. He used to wear Hessian boots, drab breeches, blue coat, and yellow

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As the winter of 1836–37 drew on Mrs. Fitzherbert's health showed signs of failing. She went out very little, and remained in the house more than was her wont. Colonel and Mrs. Damer came down to Brighton in December with their children. Not to put her to any trouble, the children stayed with their nurses in lodgings close by; they were devoted to Mrs. Fitzherbert. One of the surviving daughters of Mrs. Damer has given me the following interesting reminiscence: "In my childhood I was often at Brighton, and used to go constantly with my eldest sister to the house on the Steine. Mrs. Fitzherbert was very fond of us children, and liked having us with her. She always prepared little treats and pleasures for us, and we looked forward greatly to these visits to 'Granny,' as we used to call her. I well remember what a beautiful old lady she was, with brilliant dark eyes, and a bright and charming manner."

The King and Queen came to spend Christmas and the New Year at Brighton. On December 22, 1836, Mrs. Fitzherbert dined with them at the Pavilion for the last time. She had to decline their invitation for Christmas Day, as she was no longer able to go out in the evening. She continued to receive many marks of kindness from the royal family. The good old King came to see her and wish her a happy New Year. He, too, was broken in health, and it was evident to all, himself included, that he had not long to live. Several old friends came to see Mrs. Fitzherbert at this time, including Sir Henry Halford, and Colonel Gurwood, who had promised to act as

waistcoat. He was very popular in Brighton, because he was so friendly and unaffected; yet he was, and looked, every inch a King. I remember Queen Adelaide; she had a very large nose and red face; she used to drive up to drink the waters at the Chalybeate, a sort of Spa.

"I remember seeing Queen Victoria the first day she came to Brighton, before she was married. I was working in the Pavilion (where everything was made ready for her in a great hurry) putting up a bedstead in one of the rooms, when suddenly into the room walked a blue-eyed girl, very short, followed by two ladies; when she saw me there she laughed and walked out again almost before I realised that she was the Queen. She had only arrived half-an-hour before, and was looking over the rooms in the Pavilion. A queer sort of residence she must have thought it; at any rate she never liked it. I only saw Prince Albert once. He was driving along the Marine Parade on a cold March day, looking very blue and stiff. He was not popular in Brighton, and he did not like the place. People said it was through him the Queen came no more. I daresay it was not true, but that was the general impression."

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MRS. FITZHERBERT, *ætat.* 80

(*From a Painting in Water-Colours, by permission of* Lady BLANCHE HAYGARTH)

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one of her executors. On leaving her Colonel Gurwood went to the Duke of Wellington at Strathfieldsaye. He wrote to her from there (January 16, 1827) a letter in which he said: "The Duke has asked after you, and what you had said of Sir William Knighton's death.[1] I replied that I had mentioned to you that he, the Duke, had a very high opinion of Knighton, upon which you remarked, 'I pity him then.' I thought he never would have ceased laughing."

Mrs. Fitzherbert continued to keep up a brisk correspondence with her friends. One of her last letters was to Lady Cecilia Buggin (wife of the Duke of Sussex),[2] inquiring after the Duke, who had been ill with influenza. Lady Cecilia replied from Kensington Palace (February 15, 1837), and after narrating the Duke's illness, said: "I told him of your kind inquiries. He desires me to thank you and give you his love, and say how sorry he is that you have been ill, and we both trust that you will take care of yourself and escape this horrid complaint, which seems to spare nobody. I believe the best way is to remain within doors, and I am sure the advice given to you to do so is the best and the only sure way to avoid it."

Unfortunately, Mrs. Fitzherbert did not follow this advice. One bright morning in March she was tempted by the sunshine to go out for a drive, heedless of the fact that a keen east wind was blowing — and the east wind is nowhere keener than at Brighton. The following day she complained of feeling unwell. The doctors at first thought she was suffering from a slight chill, but within a few days she developed symptoms of a severe attack of influenza. Colonel and Mrs. Damer, who were in London, hurried down to Brighton. All that medical skill and devoted care could do was done, but Mrs. Fitzherbert grew worse, her malady being complicated by great difficulty of breathing. Mrs. Damer wrote to Sir Henry Halford, and the great physician posted down from London to attend the sick-bed of his old friend. But when he came he saw that little could be done to alleviate her sufferings; the end was near. On Saturday, March 25, it was not expected that she would live through the day, and her domestic chaplain, Father Lopez, administered to her the last rites of the Church. The priest

[1] Sir William Knighton died in 1836.
[2] Later created by Queen Victoria Duchess of Inverness.

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was praying by the bedside when Mrs. Damer's little girls were brought in to take their last farewell of "Granny" — Mrs. Fitzherbert had expressed a wish to see the children. One of them has given me the following account of this sad scene: —

"One day we children were told that Granny, as we always called her, was very ill, and our parents took us into the room where she lay dying. The priest was saying the last prayers over her, the words of which were much the same as that of Newman's beautiful poem, 'The Dream of Gerontius,' and they made such an impression on my mind that I have never forgotten them." [1]

Go forth upon thy journey, Christian soul!
Go from this world! Go in the Name of God
The omnipotent Father, Who created thee!
Go in the Name of Jesus Christ, our Lord,
Son of the Living God, Who bled for thee.
Go in the Name of the Holy Spirit, Who
Hath been poured out on thee! Go in the name
Of Angels and Archangels; in the name
Of Thrones and Dominations; in the name
Of Princedoms and Powers; and in the name
Of Cherubim and Seraphim, go forth!

Mrs. Fitzherbert lingered over Sunday, her strong constitution fighting for her to the last. In several of the churches of Brighton, not only those of her own faith, she was prayed for. Monday found her in a semi-conscious state. It was a rough, windy day (one has told me), broken by fitful gleams of sunshine, and the watchers by the dying woman's bed could hear the roar of the big waves as they broke along the beach. Thus the day wore on, Mrs. Fitzherbert growing weaker every hour. Towards evening, when the tide was ebbing, and all the light had faded off the sea, "God's finger touched her and she slept."

Mrs. Fitzherbert died on Monday, March 27, 1837, at seven o'clock in the evening, in the eighty-second year of her age. Born in the reign of George II., she died within three months of the accession of Queen Victoria.

[1] *Proficiscere, anima Christiana, de hoc mundo, &c.*

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CHAPTER XXXIII

IN MEMORIAM

(1837)

MRS. FITZHERBERT'S body lay in state for some days at her house in Brighton. A room on the ground floor was transformed into a *chapelle ardente*, under the direction of her chaplain, Father Lopez. The coffin was of English oak, and bore a plate with the following inscription: —

MARIA FITZHERBERT.
Born 26th July, 1756.
Died 27th March, 1837.
Requiescat in pace.
Amen.

The coffin was covered with a crimson velvet pall, and was placed on a bier in the centre of the room. A loving hand had laid on it a few white roses. Daylight was excluded from the chamber, and the walls were hung with black and purple. Tall wax tapers burned on either side of the bier, and a small temporary altar had been erected, on which stood a crucifix. The body was watched night and day by nuns from a community which Mrs. Fitzherbert had helped to establish in Brighton. Many friends of the deceased lady, many townsmen of Brighton, rich and poor, visited the *chapelle ardente*.[1]

Mrs. Fitzherbert had desired that her funeral should be as simple as possible, and that she should be buried in a vault in the Roman Catholic church of St. John the Baptist, at Brighton, a church which she had largely helped to build. Her wishes were carried out to the letter. The funeral took place on Thursday, April 4, 1837 — the Thursday in Easter week. It

[1] Mr. J. G. Bishop, the historian of the Brighton Pavilion, a much respected townsman of Brighton, has told me that he remembers well the lying in state. He was then a small boy, calling at the house on some errand, and one of the servants took him into the room.

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was a bright spring day, the trees on the Steine were bursting into bud, and all Nature was waking from its long sleep. The whole town seemed to have gone into mourning, and immense crowds collected on the Steine, for the deceased lady had endeared herself to all classes of people. At ten o'clock in the morning the funeral cortège left Steine House, and proceeded at a walking pace up the Marine Parade to St. John the Baptist's Church in the Bristol Road.[1] The procession consisted of the hearse, drawn by six horses, and followed by six mourning coaches, and Mrs. Fitzherbert's private carriage. Among the principal mourners were, the Earl of Munster, representing the King, Colonel the Hon. George Dawson Damer, Captain the Hon. Edward Stafford Jerningham, Sir Frederick Hervey Bathurst, Bart., Sir George Seymour, K.C.B., and Colonel Gurwood.

The coffin was placed by the side of the grave, which was in the centre of the church, facing the altar. Mrs. Dawson Damer and Mrs. Edward Jerningham, who had previously driven to the church, occupied seats close to the grave. The church was hung with black; the only light proceeding from the wax tapers around the coffin, those on the altar, and a few which lighted the church. No one was admitted to the church except those provided with tickets, nevertheless the sacred building was crowded with mourners, who included most of the principal people in Brighton, not only Roman Catholics, but also Churchmen and Nonconformists. The Requiem Mass was sung by the Rev. Dr. Cullen, assisted by several other priests, including Father Lopez. At the conclusion of the Mass the coffin was lowered into the grave, whilst the *Benedictus* was sung by the choir. The service was concluded by Dr. Cullen reciting the Lord's Prayer in English.

At the close of the service, many persons pressed forward to look at the last resting-place of one whom they had loved. In consideration of the numbers who wished to do so, the church was allowed to remain open until five o'clock in the evening.

[1] "I saw her funeral cross the Steine," Mr. Saunders told me. "There was an enormous crowd, such as I never saw before in Brighton; to us it seemed like a state funeral, but it was not." Mr. J. G. Bishop and Mr. John Haines also told me they saw the funeral procession, and there are other inhabitants of Brighton, still living, who remember it too.

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ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST'S CHURCH, BRIGHTON

WHERE MRS. FITZHERBERT IS BURIED

(*The cross marks the site of her grave*)

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A continuous stream of people passed the grave during the day, and many who had not been present at the service, were thus able to pay a last tribute of respect to the deceased.

On the Sunday following the funeral, many relatives and friends of Mrs. Fitzherbert attended divine service at the church of St. John the Baptist. The sermon at High Mass was preached by the Rev. Dr. Cullen, who took occasion to dwell on the many virtues of the deceased lady. No allusion was made by the preacher to the peculiar position she had occupied in her life, but his discourse was based on the words, "*I will give thee a crown of life.*" [1]

Nearly seventy years have come and gone since Maria Fitzherbert was laid to rest in the little church at Brighton. In the great bustling town outside, the very name of the woman to whom, perhaps more than any one else, Brighton owes its prosperity, is well-nigh forgotten; and except for the changed and dismantled house on the Steine, one may search in vain for any trace of her. But in the quiet church where she sleeps her last sleep her tradition still lingers. One who was not of her faith, and not of her blood, but was bound to her by the strongest ties of love and duty, her adopted daughter, Mrs. Damer, has raised a marble monument to her memory. The veiled and kneeling figure reveals Mrs. Fitzherbert as she was in the last year of her life. Beneath runs this inscription: —

"In a vault near this spot are deposited the remains of
MARIA FITZHERBERT.
She was born on the 26th of July, 1756,
And expired at Brighton on the 27th of March, 1837.
One to whom she was more than a parent has
placed this monument to her revered and beloved
memory, as a humble though feeling tribute of
her everlasting gratitude and affection.
R.I.P.

That is all, but on the third finger of the left hand there appears a *third* wedding ring — a silent witness to the fact that this woman, though never a Queen, was yet a King's wife.

[1] The will of Mrs. Fitzherbert, with two codicils, was proved April 20, 1837, at Doctors' Commons, by Sir George Seymour, Colonel Gurwood, and Samuel Forster, Esq., the executors. The amount of personal property was sworn under £35,000.

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Mrs. Fitzherbert's death occasioned widespread grief, and the public and private testimony to her worth was great. The press teemed with notices, some of them not very accurate in their facts, but all, with rare exceptions, speaking of the deceased lady with great respect.[1] The day after she died expresses were sent to Windsor, Kensington, and other residences of the members of the royal family, announcing the sad intelligence. King William IV. was walking on the terrace at Windsor when the news came. He heard it with emotion, and immediately went indoors to tell the Queen. The King and Queen and nearly every member of the royal family wrote to Mrs. Damer to express their deep regret. The Duke of Sussex, to whom Mrs. Damer had sent a ring containing some of Mrs. Fitzherbert's hair, wrote thanking her for "the memorial of my dear and lamented friend, though indeed my regard and friendship for her was too sincere to require anything to put me in mind of her." [2]

Lady Louisa Stuart,[3] who was a contemporary of Mrs. Fitzherbert, and had known her throughout her long life, wrote to her nephew, Colonel Damer, saying: "I can imagine no heavier affliction than has befallen Mrs. Damer. It is no matter by what *name* people are called, the cherisher of her infancy and the tender friend of her youth was essentially a *mother* to her, and only entitled to the more affection and gratitude for being so *voluntarily*, and not bound to it by duty. I always believed poor Mrs. Fitzherbert very amiable, and respected her character even in old days, when party set in full tide against her, so I can give credit to everything you say. No woman that ever enjoyed the confidence of a prince kept so clear of abusing it, or meddled so little with matters of state, and I am persuaded she never made an enemy in her life." [4]

The Duke of Bedford wrote to Sir Henry Halford: "Poor Mrs. Fitzherbert! I had known her for more than fifty years. She had a feeling and excellent heart." [5]

Lord Munster wrote to Mrs. Damer a few months later: —

[1] *Vide* Appendix D.
[2] Kensington Palace, May 26, 1837.
[3] Lady Louisa Stuart (1737–1851), daughter of John, Earl of Bute (sometime Prime Minister), and grand-daughter of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu.
[4] Gloucester Place, London, W., March 30, 1837.
[5] Woburn Abbey, March 29, 1837.

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THE MEMORIAL TO MRS. FITZHERBERT IN ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST'S CHURCH, BRIGHTON

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"BRIGHTON, *August* 28, 1837.

"I have been over the old house on the Steine. I had no idea the whole house and furniture would be so exactly as she left it. What scenes did not every object recall to my remembrance! The dressing-room with most of the India ink profiles there — a little white bed in the corner of *her* bedroom, that sad room. On entering the drawing-room, I almost expected to see you on the sofa behind the screen — all as you saw it the last time. I stood in the library and remembered it as your old school-room with the governess. I went down to the dining-room, where as a boy I used to dine sometimes five days out of the seven, and you came in to dessert. I recalled it as our theatre, where we used to act. And then as hung with black on the last sad occasion, when she left us for the last time."

Nearly every contemporary writer, who has occasion to allude to Mrs. Fitzherbert, speaks of her in terms of the highest praise. Even Greville, who was no respecter of persons, wrote in his diary: "She was not a clever woman, but of a very noble spirit, disinterested, generous, honest, and affectionate, greatly beloved by her friends and relations, popular in the world, and treated with uniform distinction and respect by the royal family." [1]

Within three months of Mrs. Fitzherbert's death King William IV. died, and the youthful Queen Victoria ascended the throne, who by her pure life and lofty ideals was destined to restore the prestige of the British Monarchy. In the enthusiasm aroused by the new reign, the Georgian era, and its contemporary figures, good and bad alike, were hurried into oblivion — Mrs. Fitzherbert among them. But among the friends who had known and loved her, her memory was cherished so long as they lived, as that of a noble and true-hearted woman.

[1] "Greville Memoirs," ed. 1885, vol. iii. p. 396.

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APPENDIX A

THE FITZHERBERT PAPERS

(1833–1905)

"To save mine honour from corruption."

WHEN in August 1833 Mrs. Fitzherbert placed the papers which she had reserved from the burning at Coutts's Bank, "at the disposal of the Earl of Albemarle and Lord Stourton," it was to Lord Stourton that she looked chiefly for help and guidance concerning them. Lord Stourton was her cousin and a Roman Catholic. Necessarily, therefore, there existed between them a community of interest which could not be shared by Lord Albemarle, who though a trusted friend, was bound to her by neither the tie of blood nor of religion. It was necessary for Mrs. Fitzherbert to have two trustees, but it was to Lord Stourton that she entrusted the vindication of her character with posterity. This is clear from a letter she wrote to him from Paris, December 7, 1833, a few months after the papers had been deposited at Coutts's Bank. After thanking him for the interest he took in her affairs, she said: —

"I know I must have been a great torment to you, but I am sure the kind feelings of your heart will derive some gratification, in having relieved me from a state of misery and anxiety which has been the bane of my life, and *I trust, whenever it shall please God to remove me from this world, my conduct and character* (*in your hands*) *will not disgrace my family and my friends.*" [1]

Mrs. Fitzherbert's intention, therefore, with regard to the papers was perfectly clear. On her return to England in 1834, and during the last three years of her life (1834–1837), she frequently discussed the subject with Lord Stourton. She

[1] Langdale, *op. cit.*, p. 108. All the quotations in this Appendix are from Langdale's "Memoir," unless otherwise stated.

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authorised him to write her biography after her death, and dictated a short narrative of her life to him, which, with the papers she had retained at Coutts's Bank, she deemed sufficient for the purpose. The time she left to his discretion. Lord Stourton urged her to give more definite instructions as to what was to be done with the papers in the case of the death of one or both of the trustees, and she promised to do so, but postponed the matter. After the death of Sir William Knighton in 1836, Lord Stourton again raised the question. He wrote to her (November 29, 1836): "What disposition of these papers is to be made, *after the demise of those* whom you have appointed executors in regard of them?" [1] and asking for more explicit instructions. Mrs. Fitzherbert merely acknowledged Lord Stourton's letter, and promised to discuss the matter fully with him when she next came to London. But when she came Lord Stourton was at Allerton, so she wrote to him: —

"I have seen Lord Albemarle frequently, and told him the contents of your letter, respecting your seal, in case the papers should be removed from Coutts's; but as you had left town, and as you were the chief person I wished to consult about them, I have, for the present, desired Lord Albemarle not to make any application to the Duke of Wellington till some future occasion."

It is unwise to delay when one is over eighty: and a few months after writing this letter Mrs. Fitzherbert died, without leaving any definite instructions as to what was to be done with the papers at Coutts's Bank. Hence arose the difficulties and confusion that followed. Some ten days after Mrs. Fitzherbert's death, in consequence of the announcement of an unauthorised memoir, Lord Albemarle wrote to Lord Stourton (April 6, 1837) and suggested that they should consult together concerning "the charge confided to us." The publication of the unauthorised memoir was presumably prevented, since none appeared, and Lord Stourton, to whom the task of writing the authorised biography had been entrusted by Mrs. Fitzherbert, wished to break the seals of the package at Coutts's Bank to see what was in the papers. But the Duke of Wellington's ***knowledge*** was necessary to the opening of the parcel: the Duke considered

[1] Extract from a letter of Lord Stourton's to Mrs. Fitzherbert at Brighton, dated Allerton, November 29, 1836.

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this also to mean his *consent*, and he demurred. Lord Albemarle did not like to press the matter in the face of the Duke's unwillingness, and so Lord Stourton was reluctantly induced to yield to the Duke's suggestion that the documents should be left, for the time, undisturbed. "The Duke of Wellington," he says, "assumed that Mrs. Fitzherbert herself had shown an indisposition to disturb and reopen this parcel, and therefore that her friends could not, and ought perhaps not, to be more watchful over her character than she had been herself." Lord Stourton told the Duke that "my acquaintance with Mrs. Fitzherbert's sentiments as to these papers was wholly at variance to the views so entertained by his Grace." But the Duke was not to be persuaded, and Lord Stourton was induced, "however reluctantly, to yield to his Grace's suggestions, and to leave the documents for the time undisturbed."

Though foiled in this instance, Lord Stourton continued to keep watch over Mrs. Fitzherbert's good name and fair memory. In 1838, there appeared in the *Edinburgh Review*[1] an article on the marriage of Mrs. Fitzherbert to the Prince of Wales, which, though favourable to the deceased lady, contained certain errors of fact. Lord Stourton at once wrote to correct these errors. His letter was inserted in the following number of the *Edinburgh Review*,[2] and contained the following: "The marriage ceremony was performed not out of the kingdom, as you have stated, but in her own drawing-room, in her house in town, in the presence of an officiating Protestant clergyman, and of two of her own nearest relatives."

One would have thought this statement was conclusive, coming as it did from one of the leading Roman Catholic laymen in England, a cousin and trustee of the deceased lady. But the public denials in the House of Commons of Mrs. Fitzherbert's marriage were not forgotten, and it was still regarded as an open question whether she had been through *any* ceremony of marriage with the late King George IV. No one was more conscious of this than Lord Stourton, and in 1841 he made another attempt to have the packet at Coutts's Bank opened, and so put all doubt at end. "The first question is," he wrote to Lord Albemarle, "and to that I cannot reply

[1] *Edinburgh Review*, No. cxxxv. [2] Ibid., No. cxxxvi.

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in any way quite satisfactorily myself, what these papers are?" He asked Lord Albemarle to see the Duke of Wellington about it. Lord Albemarle did so, and wrote to Lord Stourton (February 1, 1841) a letter in which he said that he had called upon the Duke, who read Lord Stourton's letter. "He then requested me to state to you, that he felt he had a public duty as well as a private one to perform in keeping the papers alluded to, if possible, undisturbed, on account of their importance; that there was not now, nor had there been, any attack upon Mrs. Fitzherbert's reputation. Did any appear in any quarter, he would be eager in joining us to repel it." The Duke, however, expressed his willingness to discuss the matter with Lord Stourton, when he should come to town.

Lord Stourton heard nothing further from the Duke until he received a long letter, dated "Walmer Castle, August 10, 1841," in which, after stating his view of the circumstances which led to the placing of the papers in Coutts's Bank, the Duke said: —

"Circumstances have in some degree changed since the death of Mrs. Fitzherbert, but it is still very desirable to avoid drawing public attention to, and re-awakening, the subject by public discussion of the narrations to which the papers relate, which are deposited in the packet sealed up, to which I have above referred. And I am convinced that neither I nor any of the survivors of the royal family, of those who lived in the days in which these transactions occurred, could view with more pain any publication or discussion of them than would the late Mrs. Fitzherbert when alive. Under these circumstances, and having acted conscientiously and upon honour throughout the affairs detailed in this letter, I cannot but consider it my duty to protest, and I do protest most solemnly, against the measure proposed by your Lordship, that of breaking the seals affixed to the packet of papers belonging to the late Mrs. Fitzherbert, deposited at Messrs. Coutts's, the bankers, under the several seals of the Earl of Albemarle, your Lordship, and myself."

Nothing daunted by the Duke's decided tone, Lord Stourton again in April 1842 made a last attempt to see these papers, and asked the Duke to give him an interview with Lord Albemarle. But the Duke, though he did not decline the meeting, postponed it indefinitely. Lord Stourton was later in this year

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taken seriously ill, and became a confirmed invalid. On December 22, 1842, he told his brother, Mr. Charles Langdale, of the trust Mrs. Fitzherbert had confided in him, and of the position in which he was placed with regard to the papers she had placed at Coutts's Bank to vindicate her memory. As his ill-health made it impossible for him to fulfil the trust, he solemnly committed it to his brother. Lord Stourton died on December 4, 1846, and all the correspondence and papers which he had collected on the subject, together with the narrative dictated to him by Mrs. Fitzherbert, were placed in the hands of Mr. Langdale for the purpose of writing a biography. Lord Stourton also willed to his brother his share of control over the papers at Coutts's Bank. This he had no legal power to do, as by his death they fell under the control of Lord Albemarle, the surviving trustee. Mr. Langdale, however, formally applied to Messrs. Coutts to see the papers, and as he had no legal status, his request was formally refused. He then wrote to Lord Albemarle and the Duke of Wellington, informing them of his brother's wishes, and he received a promise from them that the documents should not be removed from Coutts's Bank without informing him. Lord Albemarle died in 1851, and his trusteeship of Mrs. Fitzherbert's papers passed to his brother, the Rev. the Hon. E. S. Keppel, whom he made his executor. The Duke of Wellington died in 1852.

Mr. Langdale, uncertain how to proceed, suffered the matter to rest until 1854, when the publication of Lord Holland's posthumous "Memoirs of the Whig Party" revived the question anew. In these "Memoirs" Lord Holland referred to the marriage of the Prince of Wales to Mrs. Fitzherbert, and said: —

"The exact date and circumstances of that ceremony have not come to my knowledge; but the account given of some part of the transaction by Mrs. Fitzherbert herself to a friend of mine, a man of strict veracity, is curious, and I believe correct. It was at the Prince's own earnest and repeated solicitations, and not at Mrs. Fitzherbert's request, that any ceremony was resorted to. She knew it to be invalid in law; she thought it nonsense, and told the Prince so. In proof that such had been her uniform opinion, she adduced a very striking circumstance, namely — that no ceremony by a Roman Catholic priest took place at all; the most obvious method of allaying her scruples,

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had she had any. I believe, therefore, that she spoke with truth when she frankly owned that she had given herself up to him, exacted no conditions, trusted to his honour, and set no value on the ceremony which he insisted on having solemnised." [1]

Mr. Langdale regarded this as an attack on Mrs. Fitzherbert's honour and good faith, and a reflection on her religion, as her marriage was regarded as valid by her Church. He thought that the time had come for him to write Mrs. Fitzherbert's biography, and tell the true story of the marriage. He therefore wrote to Mr. Edward Keppel (November 16, 1854), and requested that "a copy of the preserved documents should be placed at my disposal, the more effectively to establish the grounds upon which the friends and relations of this Lady have ever maintained her full and fair claim to their respect and esteem, and to the character of an honourable and religious woman."

In reply Mr. Keppel asked for time to consider the matter, and informed Mr. Langdale, "The packet you refer to is safe at Coutts's, the seals at present unbroken."

Mr. Langdale agreed to a few weeks' delay only, premising "that it is important the defence should not be too long delayed." Months passed and he heard nothing. He therefore wrote again, February 16, 1855, asking for a definite answer. Then Mr. Keppel wrote, February 23, 1855, and said that he had consulted the Duke of Bedford, and through him taken the opinion of Mrs. Fitzherbert's surviving executors, Sir George Seymour and Mr. Forster. "They are strongly against the production of these papers. They would only prove the marriage of the Prince with Mrs. Fitzherbert, which is not questioned, as Lord Holland's remarks go to the motives and feelings of herself and the Prince, which the evidence in the papers would not touch."

Against this decision Mr. Langdale lodged a spirited protest, and announced his intention of defending Mrs. Fitzherbert's reputation at all costs. He reminded Mr. Keppel that the papers were placed at Coutts's Bank by Mrs. Fitzherbert to prove her marriage with the Prince of Wales, and that was the only reason they were placed there. He added: "That the

[1] "Memoirs of the Whig Party," by Lord Holland, edited by his son. Vol. ii. p. 140.

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reserved papers were intended for such a purpose, and that the trustees to whose charge they were committed received them with such an understanding from her whose property they were, you must excuse me if I confidently repeat. The refusal to place them at my disposal, renders it more imperative upon me to lay before the public the whole detail of the connection between Mrs. Fitzherbert and George IV., then Prince of Wales, as narrated by herself to the late Lord Stourton; and which, without the reserved documents, will, I trust, show to the world, that whatever the conduct of George IV. may have been, that of Mrs. Fitzherbert, under trials of no ordinary description, was such as to have done honour to the purity of her character as a woman, and to her principles as a Catholic."

Mr. Langdale thereupon wrote the "Memoirs of Mrs. Fitzherbert, with an account of her Marriage with H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, afterwards King George the Fourth," [1] to which frequent reference has been made in this book. The book consists of the short narrative of her life which Mrs. Fitzherbert told to Lord Stourton; a list of the papers which she had deposited at Coutts's Bank, and all the correspondence which had passed relating to them after her death. Mr. Langdale made an eloquent defence of Mrs. Fitzherbert as a woman of virtue and a good Roman Catholic. He thus defends his own action in publishing the book: —

"All minor considerations," he says, "must yield before the paramount duty to the memory of a woman to establish her full and fair title to the virtue of chastity. That such was Mrs. Fitzherbert's just prerogative, grounded upon the strictest dictates of her conscience, and supported by the principles of her religion, and sanctioned by the decision of her Church, I am bound at all hazards to establish. To this I consider myself pledged, this I owe to the memory of the dead. This I owe to the cause of virtue, truth and religion, and at any personal risk of imputations of what nature soever, or from what quarter soever, this I am prepared, without reserve, to undertake."

By the publication of this book in 1856, Mr. Langdale authoritatively informed the world of the fact that a ceremony

[1] Only a limited edition of this book was published in 1856, and Mr. Langdale refused to have it reprinted. It has long since been out of print.

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of marriage had taken place between the Prince of Wales and Mrs. Fitzherbert. Mr. Langdale, it is true, was unable to publish the documents which Mrs. Fitzherbert had expressly deposited at Coutts's Bank to prove her marriage, but he gave a list of them and their purport. The fact that he was refused permission to publish these papers, only served to whet the public curiosity as to their contents.

As the years wore by repeated applications were made to see the papers which she deposited at Coutts's Bank, but the applications were always met with a *non possumus*. As Mrs. Fitzherbert had left no clear directions concerning the disposition of these papers after the deaths of the original trustees, the question had in fact become one of some difficulty.

So matters remained until 1905, when, under circumstances related in the preface to this book, I made an application to His Majesty the King to be allowed to see these papers, and to quote from them all that was necessary to prove the marriage of George Prince of Wales with Mrs. Fitzherbert. His Majesty was graciously pleased to grant my request, and the mystery of the Fitzherbert papers was at last solved. These documents, after a sojourn of nearly seventy years at Coutts's Bank, have now found a more fitting home in the private archives of Windsor Castle.

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APPENDIX B

MRS. FITZHERBERT'S WILL

Extracted from the Principal Registry of the Probate, Divorce, and Admiralty Division of the High Court of Justice in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury.

THIS IS THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT of me MARIA FITZHERBERT of Tilney Street, in the county of Middlesex. I give all my plate and plated articles, trinkets and personal ornaments to the Honorable Mary Georgina Emma Dawson Damer, wife of the Honorable Colonel George Lionel Dawson Damer, and to my niece, the Honorable Mary Anne Stafford Jerningham, wife of the Honorable Edward Stafford Jerningham, equally to be divided between them for their respective separate use.

I give all the residue of my personal estate whatsoever, after payment of my debts, funeral and testamentary expenses, and such legacies and annuities as I may bequeath by any codicil to this my will, to Mrs. Damer's brother Sir George Seymour, a Captain in the Royal Navy, James Weld of Lulworth Castle in the county of Dorset, Esquire, Lieutenant-Colonel Gurwood, and Samuel Forster of Lincoln's Inn, Gentleman, their executors, administrators, and assigns: In trust to get in and sell the same, and to stand possessed of the same, and the produce thereof, on the trusts hereinafter mentioned, that is to say: In trust to invest the same in Government or real securities at interest, with power from time to time to vary the said fund, but during the lives of Colonel and Mrs. Damer and the life of the survivor of them, with their, his or her consent to be signified in writing, and to stand possessed of such funds and securities: In trust to pay the income thereof to the said Mary Georgina Emma Dawson Damer during her life, for her separate use, and so that the same shall not be subject to the debts or controul of her husband, and that she shall not be at liberty to anticipate such income. And after her decease: In trust to

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pay the income of the same fund to the said George Lionel Dawson Damer during his life, and after the decease of the survivor of them the said trust fund shall be: In trust for all or such one or more of the children of the said Mary Georgina Emma Dawson Damer, at such ages and times and in such shares and manner and with such provisions for maintenance during minority and for advancement in the world as the said Mary Georgina Emma Dawson Damer shall by deed or will, executed in the presence of two or more witnesses, appoint. And in default of such appointment: In trust for all the children of the said Mary Georgina Emma Dawson Damer, who, being sons, shall attain the age of twenty-one years, or being daughters shall attain that age or marry, equally to be divided between them if more than one, and if there shall be but one such child then: In trust for such one child, and if there shall be no such child: In trust for the said Mary Georgina Emma Dawson Damer, her executors, administrators and assigns. And I hereby declare that no child of the said Mary Georgina Emma Dawson Damer taking any part of the said trust fund under any appointment to be made by her shall be entitled to any share of the unappointed part of the same fund without bringing his or her appointed share into hotchpot. And I hereby declare that after the decease of the survivor of them the said George Lionel Dawson Damer and Mary Georgina Emma Dawson Damer it shall be lawful for the said trustees or trustee to apply the whole or any part of the expectant share of any child in the said trust fund towards his or her advancement, and to apply the whole or any part of the income of such share in or towards his or her maintenance or education. And in case any of the trustees hereby appointed, or who shall be appointed as hereinafter mentioned, shall die or resign or decline to act in, or wish to be discharged from, the trusts hereby respectively reposed in them, I empower the said Mary Georgina Emma Dawson Damer, and after her death the said George Lionel Dawson Damer, and after their deaths the surviving or continuing trustees or trustee of the same fund, and if there shall be no such trustee then the executors or administrators of the last surviving trustee, by deed to appoint new trustees when necessary in the usual manner, who shall have all the same powers as the trustees had in whose room they

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shall be appointed. And I declare that the trustees for the time being shall be only responsible for their own acts and defaults, and shall have power to reimburse themselves their costs and expences. And I appoint the said George Seymour, James Weld, John Gurwood and Samuel Forster EXECUTORS of this my will. And I desire that no hatchment may be affixed to either of my houses. IN WITNESS whereof I have to this my last will and testament contained in three sheets of paper set my hand and seal, that is to say to the two preceding sheets subscribed my name, and to this third and last sheet subscribed my name and affixed my seal, this twenty-fifth day of March, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and thirty-six.

MARIA FITZHERBERT (L.S.).

SIGNED, sealed, published, and declared by the said Maria Fitzherbert the testatrix as and for her last will and testament in the presence of us, who in her presence at her request and in the presence of each other have hereunto subscribed our names as witnesses.

S. CHOLMELEY,
BARTLE J. L. FRERE, Lincoln's Inn.

LONDON, *March* 28, 1836.

I. MARIA FITZHERBERT, do make and declare this paper writing a CODICIL to my last will and testament, and to be considered as such: To my dear sister-in-law Mrs. Wat Smyth, one thousand pounds legacy. To my two nieces Lady Bathurst and Mrs. Craven one thousand pounds each. I have ever felt for them both as great an interest and very sincere affection, and had in a former will left them considerable legacies. Since that period they have both been greatly provided for, and do not stand in need of any assistance from me. I beg my kind friends S^r^ George Seymour and Frederick Seymour to accept five hundred pounds each of them as a small token of remembrance, having always had a very sincere regard and affection for them. Annuities for life: two hundred pounds to my friend Miss Lucia Jeffreys, two hundred to William Dawson, R.N., one hundred to Henry Daykin. To Mrs. Viney, Mrs. Mills and Mrs. Townshend each thirty pounds pr. ann. To Thos.

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Fisher eighty pounds pr. ann. Mrs. Street twenty-four pounds, Henry Daykin £100, Mrs. Street £50, Mrs. Viney, Mrs. Mills, Mrs. Townshend £300 each legacy. To Richard Bassett four hundred pounds legacy. I desire that the annuitys and legacys bequeathed to all my servants may be paid free of all taxes, and I request my executors to pay such duties out of the residue of my personal estate. I leave to the Honble. George D. Damer three hundred pounds legacy, and thirty pounds annuity for life to Mrs. Haselhurst, in trust to the above George D. Damer, for her own private use, totally independent of her husband. I desire my servants may have mourning and one month's board wages. The above codicil written in my own hand-writing and signed by me in the presence of

MARIA FITZHERBERT.

Witnessed by
MUNSTER, 13 Belgrave Street, London.
HARRY BLAKER, Surgeon, 33 West Street, Brighton.
Brighton, Ap[l] 26th, 1836.

To Mary Anne Jerningham and Minney Damer.

THIS PAPER is addressed to my two dear children, who I am sure will strictly comply with a few requests I wish to make. Life is uncertain, and my health and spirits are often so much depressed that I am fit for nothing. Still my anxiety is great respecting them. I pray to God they may both live long with sincere affection and attachment to each other. I am confident this will be the case; the thought reconciles my mind at taking a long farewell of them. I have loved them both with the tenderest affection any mother could do, and I have done to the utmost in my power for their interests and comfort. God bless them both, as well as all those that belong to them. I beg my dear George Damer to accept of the two large pictures of Gainsbro's in my dining room as a small remembrance of me. To dear Minney a round Sèvre table, and to Mary Anne a small commode, inlaid w[h] Sèvre, which generally stands in one of the drawing-rooms: a picture of Admiral Payne's I desire may be sent in my name to Cap[n] Mason at Lord Hood's. I have packed up trinkets in separate boxes at the Bankers w[h] Mr. Foster will deliver to you. I have written upon some of

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them directions how they are to be disposed of. The picture of the late King George the 4th by Madame le Brun belongs to Minney Damer. I gave it her a long time ago.

MARIA FITZHERBERT.

Prerogative. — In the Goods of Maria Fitzherbert, widow, deceased: —

APPEARED PERSONALLY, Bartle John Laurie Frere, a Partner in the firm of Messrs. Frere and Forster and Frere, of New Square, Lincoln's Inn, in the county of Middlesex, Solicitors, and Stephen Cholmeley, a Clerk in the said firm, and made oath that they the said Messrs. Frere & Forster were the Solicitors of the above-named Maria Fitzherbert, late of Tilney Street in the county of Middlesex, and of Brighton in the county of Sussex, widow, deceased, and that the deponents have frequently seen her write and subscribe her name to paper writings, and are thereby become well acquainted with her manner and character of handwriting and subscription. And they, having now carefully viewed and inspected the paper writings hereto annexed, purporting to be, and contain, two codicils to the last will and testament of the said deceased, the first of the said Codicils beginning thus: "I Maria Fitzherbert do make and declare this paper writing a codicil to my last will and testament," ending thus: "The above codicil written in my own handwriting and signed by me in the presence of," and thus subscribed: "Maria Fitzherbert," and having the following written at the foot thereof, to wit, "Brighton, Ap^{l} 26th, 1836," and the word four written on erasure in the 11th line of the second side. The second Codicil beginning thus: "Mary Anne Jerningham and Minney Damer," ending thus: "I gave it her a long time ago," and thus subscribed: "Maria Fitzherbert," say they verily and in their consciences believe the date "Brighton, Ap^{l} 26th, 1836," at the foot of the first Codicil as aforesaid, and the said word "four" written on erasure in the 11th line of the second side thereof, and the whole body, series and contents of the said second codicil, to be of the proper handwriting of the said Maria Fitzherbert, widow, deceased.

BARTLE J. L. FRERE,
S. CHOLMELEY.

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On the 12th day of April, 1837, the said Bartle John Laurie Frere and Stephen Cholmeley were duly sworn to the truth of this Affidavit before me,

JOHN DAUBENEY, Sur^e.

Present — W. TOWNSEND, Not. Pub.

In the Prerogative Court of Canterbury.

In the Goods of Maria Fitzherbert, widow, deceased: —

APPEARED PERSONALLY, Sir George Francis Seymour of Hampton Court Palace in the county of Middlesex and made oath that he is one of the executors named in the last will and testament with two codicils of Maria Fitzherbert, late of Tilney Street in the county of Middlesex, and of Brighton in the county of Sussex, widow, deceased; and the Deponent now referring to the second Codicil hereto annexed and which is without date, in which appears the following clause: — "I have packed up trinkets in separate boxes at the Bankers w^h Mr. Forster will deliver to you, and have written upon some of them directions how they are to be disposed of," saith that on the 8th day of the present month he was present in the deceased's house in Tilney Street aforesaid, with Lieutenant-Colonel G. Gurwood and Mr. Samuel Forster his co-executors, when a box which had been deposited by the deceased at Messrs. Coutts her Bankers, and had been brought from thence, was opened for their examination, and which was examined by Deponent in presence of his said Co-Executors accordingly. That in such box was found a box sealed up in paper on which was written "Belongs to the Honble. Mrs. Dawson Damer, August 23rd, 1836," a small paper packet also sealed up, on which was likewise written, according to the best of Deponent's recollection and belief, "This belongs to Mrs. Dawson Damer," and that there was also found in the said box a snuff box wrapped in a piece of loose brown paper having Mrs. Damer's name written thereon. The Deponent lastly saith that save as above set forth there were no trinkets in the said box, upon which the name of any person or directions as to their disposal were written, and that the said two sealed boxes have remained unopened.

G. F. SEYMOUR.

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On the 11th April, 1837, the said Sir Francis Seymour was duly sworn to the truth of this Affidavit Before me
JOHN DAUBENEY, Surᵉ.
Presᵗ — WM. TOWNSEND, Not. Pub.

Proved with two Codicils, 20th April 1837.

Fos. 28. — J. J. C.

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APPENDIX C

CONCERNING CERTAIN RELICS OF MRS. FITZHERBERT AT BRIGHTON

A FEW years ago certain relics of Mrs. Fitzherbert were on view at the Brighton Museum, to wit: —

1. A pair of small, gold shoe-buckles, of oval shape and narrow metal.
2. Plain gold bracelet, thin but broad, with a small oval malachite stone, which has been cracked.
3. A round piece of gold-coloured iron pyrites, which used to be on Mrs. Fitzherbert's dressing-table. At that period pyrites were considered to be thunderbolts, but now are known to be of earthly origin.
4. A large twisted glass scent bottle, with brass top, wrought to represent a collection of flowers and fruits. In spite of its age, the bottle still retains a powerful odour of some mixed scent.
5. A pair of rather remarkable earrings, of the drop and pendant shape. The earrings are made of some curious dark red substance, covered with glittering spangles, probably a kind of cornelian. On each are two tiny pictures, composed of extremely minute mosaics, the details of which can only be seen by the aid of a magnifying glass.
6. A slender gold ring, with amethyst.
7. A waistcoat button, which belonged to George IV.; it is of dark blue, studded with gold stars, and has an edging of small diamonds.
8. A cuff link, which belonged to George IV., consisting of one large, probably imitation, diamond.
9. A small diamond hair-pin, which belonged to Mrs. Fitzherbert.
10. A very delicate ivory fan, about six inches long, each shaft, which is carved with fretwork, being so thin as to be translucent. The whole is held together by a diamond-headed rivet.

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11. A beautiful gold watch, about an inch and a quarter in diameter. The face and back are edged with seed pearls. The dial is enamelled. The watch is of a vertical escape movement, and apparently in good working order.
12. A gold, richly-chased buckle for a waistbelt, the ornamentation being in some parts enamelled in different colours.
13. A porcelain scent bottle, with a gold top, the shape being a flattened sphere. It had a pattern of lines, enclosing small flowers and butterflies. There is still a slight odour about it.
14. A small flat candlestick, with hexagonal tray, ornamented with gold and pictures of small shells.
15. A small circular china stand.
16. A summer dress of white muslin, covered with a line pattern and small flowers worked by hand in different coloured silks. In some places the colours are very bright, and in others faded.
17. A white shawl, with fringe and deep border of a dark-coloured pattern.
18. Two satin sachets, one probably used to carry a purse, of pointed shape and three-sided, cream-coloured, covered with flower pattern in gold thread, and the other, probably used for carrying a handkerchief, flat and oblong in shape, lined with cream-coloured satin; the outside has a ruby ground with stamped cornflower pattern in cream colour.[1]

Mrs. Fitzherbert gave these articles to her maid, who had been with her for many years, and to whom she also bequeathed an annuity. On her death the maid left these relics to her relative, the wife of a Mr. Rush, of Daventry. When Mrs. Rush died, her husband submitted them to the Mayor and Corporation of Brighton, in the hope that they would purchase them as relics of a lady who had done so much for Brighton. They were on view for some time at the Brighton Museum, and attracted considerable interest. But the Corporation declined to buy the relics, and they passed into the hands of a private collector, Mr. John Haines, a much respected townsman of Brighton. Through the courtesy of Mr. Haines, I am able to publish a few of them in this book.

Mrs. Fitzherbert's house at Brighton, Steine House, was sold by public auction in January 1838. Her furniture, except

[1] *Brighton Herald.*

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MRS. FITZHERBERT'S HOUSE AT BRIGHTON

(*As it is to-day*)

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for certain articles which Colonel and Mrs. Damer removed to 6 Tilney Street (her London house), was also sold by auction a few days previously. Some of it still survives, scattered about in various houses in Brighton, but little of it could now be authenticated. In the case of the relics above mentioned, no such difficulty exists, and it is a pity that the Brighton Municipality allowed them, with their interesting associations, to pass out of their hands. In Mrs. Fitzherbert's old house on the Steine there is nothing to tell one that she once lived there; and in the Pavilion, where she once reigned almost as a queen, there is little to recall her memory except three or four cartoons, one of them so scurrilous that it ought not to be allowed to disfigure the walls.

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APPENDIX D

AN APPRECIATION OF MRS. FITZHERBERT

THE following article in the *Brighton Gazette*, March 30, 1837, written a few days after Mrs. Fitzherbert's death by one who knew her well, may be quoted: —

"The late Mrs. Fitzherbert has occupied too extraordinary a place in the history of this country for her decease not to demand at our hands some tribute of respect and regard. Those of our readers who will look back to some of the events that marked, in a very peculiar manner, the beginning of the latter half of the reign of George III., will remember the very interesting and remarkable position she then occupied in this country. Having avoided by every means in her power the position that afterwards became her lot; united by the laws of her Church to one who for many years had sought her; placed on an eminence whence she could do more injury, public and private, than any one before her since the commencement of the last century; by the effect of her personal charms, and the simplicity and integrity of her character, finding herself at the head of society, she thus through a long life succeeded in winning the respect of all those who were, by the circumstances of her situation, brought into contact with her. And when we say this, we mean to say that we have reason to believe that, from nearly the first moment her name became conspicuous in the annals of this country, she enjoyed the esteem and expressed regard of the very *highest Personages* in it. The influence she possessed was always exercised for the honour of the Personage she was, by the forms of her Church, united to. His honour, that of the country, and his position in it, were, it is well known, the first objects of her anxiety. Through an existence prolonged beyond the lot of most people, she made more real friends than almost any one we are acquainted with. Those friendships were cemented by a reliance on the integrity of her

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character, and led to unlimited confidence, which was ever observed by her with sacred inviolability. The honour, frankness, and straightforwardness of her disposition procured her the intimate acquaintance of some of the most eminent men of the time in which she lived. Many of them are still alive, and can bear witness to the truth with which this portrait of her is drawn, and to the affectionate respect with which, to her latest breath, they have continued to regard her. In her more familiar circle she was generous, indulgent, and hospitable. She retained in advanced age the warmth, the enthusiasm, the freshness and disinterested feelings of youth. Her piety was fervent and unostentatious. Her life was one of active benevolence. Her cheerfulness was very remarkable, and evidently the result of the pleasure she was herself afforded by making others happy.

"Many are those who have been the objects of her generosity to a very unusual degree; charity was never asked of her in vain. Very numerous are the persons who for years have existed on her support. To her more immediate attendants she was at once a friend and a benefactress. She has sunk into her grave full of years, having a firm reliance on the merits of her Saviour, lamented by all who had the happiness to know her, but deeply deplored by those who for many years have been the objects upon whom her tender solicitude was lavished, and will ever revere her memory. Her loss to the poor will be irreparable, and society in general will feel the void left by one who possessed, in an eminent degree, more of the finer qualities of our nature, and fewer of the imperfect, than any one to whom we can at present allude. We shall close this hasty and incomplete sketch of the character of this most exalted and excellent lady, by informing our readers that she was one of the first persons who attracted good company to Brighton, and to her undoubtedly were due many of the first advantages possessed by this town."

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APPENDIX E

LIST OF AUTHORITIES

UNPUBLISHED MSS.

1. The Fitzherbert Papers, formerly at Coutts's Bank, now in the private archives at Windsor Castle. By gracious permission of His Majesty the King.
2. Letters from the Duke of Kent, the Duke of York, and other members of the Royal Family to Mrs. Fitzherbert. By gracious permission of His Majesty the King.
3. Memorandum written by the late Admiral Sir George Seymour, G.C.B., on the Education, by Mrs. Fitzherbert, of the Hon. Mrs. George Dawson Damer (*née* Seymour).
4. Extracts from the correspondence between Mrs. Fitzherbert and the late Hon. Mrs. George Dawson Damer (1820–34).
5. Miscellaneous letters and documents duly specified in this book.

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Lord Stanhope's Life of Pitt, vol. ii.
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The Carlisle MSS. " " "
The Lonsdale MSS. " " "
The Ailesbury MSS. " " "
The Creevey Papers. Edited by the Right Hon. Sir Herbert Maxwell.
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The Greville Memoirs.
Sir William Knighton's Memoirs.
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The Croker Papers: Correspondence and Diaries of John Wilson Croker. Edited by Louis J. Jennings. 1884.
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